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John D.D. Williams.

LETTERS

ON

THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES

OF

EDUCATION.

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V. 2

BY ELIZABETH HAMILTON,
Author of the Memoirs of Modern Philosophers, &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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LETTERS

ON

THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES

OF

EDUCATION.

LETTER I.

On the necessity of obtaining a knowledge of the intellectual faculties, in order to their proper cultivation.—How this knowledge is to be acquired.—Futility of endeavouring to cultivate the faculties out of the order prescribed by Nature.—A short analysis of the plan to be pursued.—Reflections.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

HAVING endeavoured to point out the necessity of paying an early and unremitting attention to the active powers of the human mind, it now remains for me to attempt an examination of the principles upon which we ought to proceed in the improvement of the intellectual faculties. If we admit, as a fundamental principle, *that the true end of education is to bring all the powers and faculties of our nature to the highest perfection of which they are capable;* it evidently follows, that an adequate knowledge of these powers and faculties is absolutely necessary towards the accomplishment of the

end we have in view. The diffusion of this species of knowledge would doubtless correct many errors, both in theory and practice; and did it once become general among those with whom the first years of life are commonly spent, would produce consequences of the utmost importance to society.

But where are we to search for this desirable information? Must we turn to the voluminous works of philosophers, and there seek for this hidden treasure, amid all the rubbish of conjecture and hypothesis? Such a task would be, to the generality of our sex, impossible: nor were it possible, would it probably be attended with much advantage.

To explore the nature of the human mind is, indeed, the proper object of metaphysical inquiry; but few philosophers have been at sufficient pains to discriminate and ascertain the different degrees of certainty that attend their discoveries. With all that is speculative or conjectural upon this subject we have properly no concern; but happily for us, we may derive an adequate knowledge of all that is true and certain, by means of reflection and observation.

"We take it for granted," says the venerable Reid, "that, by attentive reflection, a man may gain a clear and certain knowledge of the operations of his own mind; a knowledge no less clear and certain than that which he has of an external object, when it is set before his eyes. Another source of information upon this subject is a due attention to the course of human actions and conduct. The actions of men are effects; their sentiments, their passions and their affections, are causes of those effects; and we may in many cases, form a judgment of the cause from the effect. Not only the

actions, but even the opinions, of men, may sometimes give light into the frame of the human mind. The opinions of men may be considered as the effects of their intellectual powers, as their actions are the effects of their active principles. Even the prejudices and errors of mankind, when they are general, must have some cause no less general; the discovery of which will throw some light upon the frame of the human understanding."

Fortified by such authority, I need not scruple to aver, that by reflection upon the operations of our own minds, and attentive observation of the conduct and opinions of others, we may attain all the information that is absolutely requisite for us upon the subject in question; and that the greatest advantage to be derived from the disquisitions of the learned, is the leading our minds to a more attentive reflection and observation than we might otherwise be inclined to bestow. "The understanding," as Mr. Locke beautifully observes, "Like the eye, whilst it makes us see and perceive all other things, takes no notice of itself; and it requires art and pains to set it at a distance, and make it its own object." This "art and pains" are implied in serious reflection; and to this reflection it is the object of these volumes to call the guardians of the rising generation.

Let it not be imagined, that I mean to engage my sex in the nice subtleties of logic or metaphysics. It is not for the purpose of exercising their minds in useless speculation, that I exhort them to the species of inquiry alluded to; but it is to enable them to discharge, with fidelity and honour, the momentous duties to which Providence has been pleased to call them.

Parents are the agents of the Most High in extending the blessing of existence. But in giving life to a new race of beings is their agency at an end? Ought they not still to consider themselves as the instruments of the Deity, employed by Him to train up a certain portion of his rational offspring to a capacity for the enjoyment of that felicity which he has prepared for those who love him? In all that we know of his decrees, we behold a provision for the gradual improvement, and final perfection of the human race. In this beneficent plan parents have the privilege of co-operating. Glorious privilege! Who that had a sense of its importance would sacrifice it at the shrine of vanity, or relinquish it at the suggestion of selfish indolence?

To mothers is entrusted the care of rational beings in the most important period of their existence; the springs of human conduct are in their hands. From them must the native passions and affections of the heart receive their direction; by them must the germ of intellect be taught to expand; by them must the foundation be laid of all that is great, and good, and admirable, in the human character. These are the important privileges by which our sex is honoured; these are the duties to which it is called. Let not assistance towards the due performance of them be despised, however humble the hand that offers it.

In entering upon the cultivation of the understanding, it is necessary to premise, that I do not intend to prescribe any particular course of study, or to point out the best methods of instruction in any branch of learning or science. To those

therefore, who confine their views solely to the acquirement of this or that accomplishment, my observations will necessarily appear dull and uninteresting, because totally destitute of rules that may facilitate the attainment of their particular object.

It is observed by an authority to which I am always proud to refer, that "to instruct youth in the languages and in the sciences is comparatively of little importance, if we are inattentive to the habits they acquire; and are not careful in giving to all the different faculties, and all their different principles of action, a proper degree of employment. Abstracting entirely from the culture of their moral powers, how extensive and difficult is the business of conducting their intellectual improvement! To watch over the associations which they form in their tender years; to give them early habits of mental activity; to rouse their curiosity, and to direct it to proper objects; to exercise their ingenuity and invention; to cultivate in their minds a turn for speculation, and at the same time preserve their attention alive to the objects around them; to awaken their attention to the beauties of nature, and to inspire them with a relish for intellectual enjoyment; these form *but a part* of the business of education, and yet the execution even of this part requires an acquaintance with the general principles of our nature, which seldom falls to the share of those to whom the instruction of youth is commonly entrusted."*

The sketch that is here drawn by a masterly hand will better explain to you my notions upon the subject of intellectual improvement than the

* Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, p. 24.

most laboured definition. Still I must agree with the enlightened author; that these particulars form but a part of the business of education: They are but a few of the necessary means that must be employed in accomplishing our great end.

To qualify a human being for the true enjoyment of existence, the highest cultivation of the intellectual powers will not be sufficient, unless these powers be properly directed; this direction they must receive from the bias that has been given to the desires and affections of the heart. If these desires and affections have been corrupted by improper indulgence, or perverted and depraved by means of powerful impressions made upon the tender mind, we may give our children knowledge, we may give them learning, we may give them accomplishments, but we shall never be able to teach them to apply these acquirements to just or noble purposes.

To explain and to urge the importance of giving such a direction to the active powers of the mind, as is agreeable to the precepts of divine philosophy, was the particular object of my first Series of Letters. But though my views were chiefly directed towards the culture of the heart, it was impossible so entirely to separate subjects in themselves united, as not to blend my ideas of the early cultivation of the mental powers, with what I advanced on the cultivation of the affections. The subjects, indeed, ought never to be considered as separate and distinct; though, from our limited powers, it is necessary, in works of this nature, to view them in succession.

That the greatest perfection of which our nature is susceptible, consists in the capability

of exerting, in an eminent degree, not one or two of the faculties with which Providence has endowed us, *but the whole of these faculties;* and of having the direction given to this exertion, under the constant influence of the pious and benevolent affections; I believe few will be inclined to deny. This is the perfection after which we ought incessantly to labour; of this perfection it has pleased the Deity to give us an example in Him, who, in compassion to our infirmities, *took not on him the nature of angels*, that is to say, gave us not an example of perfection beyond the grasp of our present faculties to conceive, or of our present powers to imitate.

In the character of our blessed Saviour we behold the union of the intellectual and moral powers of a man in their most exalted state of perfection; nor is it doing justice either to his example or his precepts, to keep our eye fixed upon one part of the character, while we neglect the other. His precepts and example are never at variance; while he taught the necessity and advantage of improving every talent with which Heaven has entrusted us, he displayed every faculty of the human mind exerted in the cause of piety and virtue. To give our children such a partial and imperfect education, as shall render them inclined to bury their talents in the earth, is to act directly contrary to the commands of Him, who gives them with an express injunction that they may be occupied.

As the body is composed of a variety of organs, of which each is equally necessary to the well-being of the whole; so the mind is a compound, if I may so speak, of a variety of faculties, none of which can be defective, without enfeebling or

injuring the rest. The lungs are not more necessary to the functions of the heart, than accurate conception to sound judgment. The circulation of the blood is not more necessary to the animal economy, than memory is to the mental. But memory depends upon attention; the accuracy of conception has the same source; and if both are not duly exercised by means of the perceptions, neither will attain perfection.

Where any one of the faculties has obtained a manifest ascendancy, the character will be imperfect, unhappy in itself, and useless to society. This irregular shoot is sometimes dignified by ignorance with the name of *genius;* but genius is not the partial vigour of a single faculty. It implies the possession of all the powers of the mind in an eminent degree. The new combinations which genius produces, either in literature or in the arts, are the production of vigorous conception and sound judgment; aided by the creative power of imagination, and modelled by taste. Where any of these appear to be wanting, the inventions of genius must be proportionally defective. To suppose that genius can exist without them, is absurd.

The same want of reflection leads into other errors, which are frequent causes of disappointment. In the present state of refinement, the cultivation of taste is an object of much importance: in the education of young ladies, it indeed often appears to be the only object that is deemed worthy of attention. To ascertain the best and most certain method of cultivating this faculty will, therefore, I doubt not, be considered as a very desirable object. If these letters are read with attention, I hope the discovery will be made. I do not despair of convincing the most incredulous, of

the utter impossibility of cultivating taste without the previous cultivation of the leading faculties. It is here, however, necessary to premise, that by taste, wherever the word occurs, I invariably mean that faculty of the mind, whereby we are enabled to *perceive*, and to *feel*, whatever is beautiful or sublime in Nature or in the arts. It is necessary to give this definition, because the term is often applied to denote *predilection;* and this application of it has given rise to much confusion, not only in colloquial language, but in the writings of some ingenious authors. A predilection for music or painting may be acquired by means of habit and of association; but these are inadequate to the production of the *emotions of taste*, which have their origin in other sources. All animals that have nice perceptions, are capable of acquiring a predilection for certain sounds or colours; but the emotions of taste are peculiar to the human race, and even in man are confined to the circle of the cultivated.

The same faculties which must unite their operations, in order to render the mind susceptible of the emotions of sublimity or beauty, are equally necessary to the imagination. An early and partial cultivation of this faculty is an evil pregnant with so much mischief, that it cannot be too severely deprecated. To it we are indebted for those thousand extravagances in opinion and in conduct, which extort the pity of the wise, and the censures of the severe. To it we owe the motley absurdities, which, under the name of novels, deprave the taste, and corrupt the affections, of the youthful heart; and in the early incitement that is given to the imagination, while the powers of conception and judgment are suffered to lie dormant, we see the reason why such books are read with avidity

and delight. A predilection for the wild and extravagant must be the inevitable consequence of introducing trains of thought, made up of unnatural combinations, at a period when the mind has obtained few accurate ideas, and the judgment has been but little exercised.

The imagination that is not regulated by judgment, is pernicious in exact proportion to its strength. It presents to the mind's eye a false glass, through which no object is seen in its natural size and just proportion. All is distorted; though by the glare of false colouring, the deformity escapes detection. Thus, by injudicious management, is that faculty which, under proper regulation, is the ornament and blessing of our present state, converted into a source of error and delusion. Thus what was intended for our happiness is rendered productive of misery, and confusion is introduced into the works of God!

Nor is the partial cultivation of the faculties confined to taste and imagination. Upon a strict investigation of this important subject, I am afraid we should find, that it is no uncommon thing to attempt the cultivation of the reasoning faculty, without having paid any regard to the culture of those by which, in the order of nature, it is preceded. Have we no abstract reasoners who show a deficiency in judgment? No metaphysicians who betray the absence of that common sense which has sound judgment for its basis? Is it not to the neglect of the judging faculty, that we must attribute the favourable reception which the crude dreams of speculative visionaries meet with from the young? How should they detect sophistry, whose minds have never been exercised on truth?

Where the judgment has not been duly cultivated, it is in vain that we endeavour to lead the mind to general reasoning; on such minds the sciences, that afford the most powerful aid to the faculty of abstraction, are lost. Those who know what assistance is to be derived from a knowledge of mathematics in this particular, are apt to envy such as have been favoured with opportunities of making this acquirement. But on what numbers is this useful branch of science totally thrown away? By how few is it made use of as a means of further improvement! With the cultivation of judgment, the means will ever be rested in as the end. The knowledge of various languages opens a rich and inexhaustible mine to the cultivated understanding; but if judgment does not lend its assistance, the ore will never be extracted. While we devote the most precious years of life to the study of languages, it is surely proper to take some precautions against the possibility of so much pains proving utterly abortive. Let it be remembered, that to be able to construe Greek and Latin is one thing, and to be inspired with a taste for classical literature is another. The first you will perhaps say, is sufficient to qualify your sons for the professions to which you destine them. But who in any profession, ever rose to distinguished eminence without taste and judgment?

Is a taste for classical literature acknowledged to be an accomplishment worthy of a gentleman? Do not flatter yourself that it will ever be acquired, without accuracy of conception, and soundness of judgment. Nor will these be sufficient, if pains be not at the same time taken, to fix such associations as may introduce habits of thinking favourable to

the cultivation of sentiment. How much this is attended to at great seminaries, I leave it to parents to inquire. Let them reflect on the nature of the human mind, and consider which of its faculties are likely to receive improvement, where hundreds of bad and good are promiscuously mingled. Where the time of boys is so entirely at their own disposal, that of the four-and-twenty hours but two or three at the utmost are spent under the master's eye; of the remainder, when we deduct what is employed in the important business of purveying, in quarrelling, and in play, we shall find little left for the purposes of voluntary improvement. But unless much previous pains have been bestowed, how can we expect that boys completely left to their own disposal, goaded to idleness and dissipation by example, incited by the same means to sensual gratification, and destitute of guide or monitor, should voluntarily betake themselves to improvement? Such instances are, I believe, sufficiently rare; and wherever they occur, we may be assured that the foundation had been laid at home. Where this is wanting, all that can, from the nature of things, be acquired at school, is merely a verbal knowledge of the languages. The mind will not certainly at this active season remain stationary: it will be sharpened by suspicion; its sagacity will be called forth by selfishness; and the experience of fraud, deceit, and perfidy will give a premature existence to the feelings of indignation, jealousy, and revenge. It is therefore evident, that where boys are to be sent to great schools, an uncommon degree of previous pains is necessary, in order to secure them from all the fatal consequences of such a plunge, and to enable them to reap all the benefit which such institutions are calculated to produce.

If in analyzing the faculties of the human mind, we find that Providence has made a manifest distinction betwixt the sexes, by leaving the female soul destitute of any of the intellectual powers, it will become us to submit to the divine decision. But if, upon inquiry, we find that no such partiality has been shown by Heaven; it is incumbent upon us to consider, by what right we take upon us to despise the gift of God! When we neglect the cultivation of the faculties which he has so graciously bestowed, can we flatter ourselves that we act in concert with our Almighty Father? Let us examine the mode of education adopted at our great boarding-schools, and say which of the faculties of the soul it has a tendency to improve? Let us reflect on the manner in which education is too often conducted at home, and pronounce how far it is calculated to bring to perfection those high intellectual endowments with which Heaven has entrusted us? Could it be proved, that the rational faculties are indeed useless to the sex; and that the duties to which they are called, as intelligent and accountable beings, as daughters, sisters, wives, mothers, and members of society, could be equally well performed by means of those powers which they have in common with the brute creation; then might the higher faculties of the soul be neglected with impunity.

To the wretched beings who are destined to be shut up in the zenanas of eastern despots, reason would be not only an useless but a cruel gift. The accomplishments, however superficial, which can help to amuse the listless hours of hopeless captivity, ought by them to be prized as a resource from wretchedness. Considering themselves in no higher light than as mere objects of sensual appe-

tite, it is to this point that their whole endeavours will necessarily be directed.

> Bred only and completed to the taste
> Of fretful appetence—to sing, to dance,
> To dress, and troll the tongue, and roll the eye—
> Yet empty of all good, wherein consists
> Woman's domestic honour and chief praise.
>
> *Milton.*

Such education to women so destined, is perfectly appropriate ; and the sole inconsistency which we can detect in the eastern system is in permitting their sons, as well as daughters, to pass the most important period of youth under the tuition of such degraded beings. By them are the seeds of moral depravity effectually sown ; and sloth, and ignorance, and pride, and self-importance, with every species of corruption, become the inheritance of the children committed to their care. Such are the consequences that must necessarily follow, when those who are destined to instruct others are themselves destitute of instruction !

Where the chief aim in education is directed to any other point than the improvement of the intellectual and moral powers, an artificial character will be produced, which, neither guided by reason, nor inspired by any noble or generous sentiment, will be the mere puppet of opinion, and the creature of imitation. But if imitation is made to supply the use of reason, is it probable, that the early associations will be such as to lead the mind to choose the brightest patterns of virtue ? Alas ! experience has fully proved the contrary. Experience shows us daily examples of the fatal consequences of carrying the system of *zenana* education into practice, in a country where women are

called to act an important part on the theatre of society. Without intellect there can be no principle, and without principle there can be no security for virtue.

In order to cultivate the intellectual faculties to advantage, it appears to me that we ought to accompany nature in her progress ; and as she gradually unfolds the powers of the mind, that we should devote ourselves to the improvement of each faculty, in the order it is by her presented.

Assuming this as a principle, I shall proceed in the following letters to examine, in the first place, the faculty of PERCEPTION ; showing the advantages that are to be derived from its assiduous cultivation, and the very great disadvantages that accrue from its neglect.

ATTENTION is the next subject that will naturally fall under our consideration. I shall be at some pains to illustrate its importance ; and shall not scruple to advance upon it arguments which appear convincing to my own mind, though they are unsupported by the authority of others. If they are founded in truth they will stand the test of investigation ; if otherwise, I should be sorry to protract their fall.

CONCEPTION is the next faculty brought forth by Nature. By conception I mean the ideas which we form of absent objects of sense, or of our past sensations. So much depends upon the vigour of this faculty, that I cannot be at too much pains to inculcate the necessity of its being cultivated with never-ceasing vigilance. I shall, therefore, do all in my power to urge the careful cultivation of this faculty, by an explanation of the important consequences to which it leads ; and shall give you such hints with respect to its improvement, as I hope,

may be found of use to those who are concerned in the practical part of education.

The faculty of JUDGMENT is the next that will demand our attention. I shall trace its progress from its first dawn in the infant mind to its maturity; and though conscious that my abilities are inadequate to the magnitude of my subject, I shall do what in me lies to enforce its importance. To the neglect of this faculty, all the follies, and many of the vices, which abound among us, may be fairly traced. Where the judgment is sound and unperverted, the unruly desires and affections will not revel without control; but in order to the cultivation of sound judgment, it is not only necessary that the affections be uncorrupted, but that they be *early engaged on the side of truth.*

Having dwelt at large on the cultivation of judgment, we shall then proceed to an examination of the faculty of ABSTRACTION. This faculty, though common to all, and susceptible of great improvement, is seldom cultivated to any perfection, but by the few whose course of studies has led them to cherish a turn for speculative inquiry. If general reasoning were indeed useful to none but the philosopher, we should leave the philosopher to enjoy it as his peculiar prerogative. But if it can be proved to be no less necessary in the conduct of life than in the speculations of philosophy, it becomes our business to endeavour to find out the means which are best adapted to its improvement. These the circumscribed limits of my present plan will not permit me to explain at large; neither are my abilities equal to such a task: but having proved the advantages which result from the cultivation of this faculty, the hints which I shall offer, may be

sufficient to direct the mind in search of higher guides.

Subsequent to abstraction I shall place what offers upon the cultivation of TASTE and IMAGINATION, because the faculty of abstraction is necessary to both. A few hints concerning the necessity of cultivating the power of REFLECTION will conclude the series.

And now, my friend, that I have laid before you a complete view of the plan which it is my intention to pursue, you will be able in some measure to decide upon its propriety. Where I fail in the execution, candour will make allowances for the imperfections of one who makes no pretensions to superior abilities. Placed by Providence in a situation undisturbed by the pressure of life's cares, though by an experience of its sufferings called to serious reflection ; blest with leisure, and early inspired with such a taste for inquiry as gives that leisure full employment ; I should have deemed myself highly culpable, if I had declined the task to which I was called by friendship, and urged by the hope which is dear to every generous mind—the hope of being in some degree useful. The arrogance and ambition of a dictator are alike foreign to my heart. But to be an humble instrument in rousing my sex from the lethargy of quiescent indolence, to the exertion of those faculties which the bounty of a kind Providence has conferred ; to be the means of turning the attention to those objects which tends to the progressive improvement of the human race, is a species of glory to which, I confess, I am not indifferent. If in this way

> " To covet honour be a sin,
> " I am the most offending soul alive."

But lest I should be tempted to further egotism, I hasten to assure you how much

I am your's, &c.

LETTER II.

PERCEPTION.

Progressive development of the faculties.—Perception explained.—Hints towards its cultivation in early infancy.—Its connexion with the benevolent affections.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THERE is no subject more curious in its nature, or that can possibly be more universally interesting, than the manner in which Nature operates in the development of the rational faculties of man. The slowness of the progress is apt to excite our impatience ; while, in fact, it ought to call forth our highest admiration.

A cursory view of what a child acquires in the first two years of its life, will convince us, that were the faculties to open with a rapidity equal to our wishes, the powers of the mind would counteract each other in such a manner as effectually to prevent their ever coming to perfection. Happily, Nature at that early period presents an insuperable bar to our attempts of improving upon her plan. We may indeed counteract her wise designs, by retarding the operation of those faculties which she has then produced, and on the exercise of which depends the strength and vigour of the future powers ; we may frustrate her plan, but we cannot ac-

celerate it. It is not till five or six years of life have elapsed, that we set about this vain attempt, then we sometimes do set about it in good earnest, and insist upon the powers of imagination, judgment, and reflection, coming at our call, like the spirits of Glendower from the vasty deep :—

"But do they come, when you do call them ?"

Alas ! we trouble not ourselves to observe whether they do or no. It is sufficient that children learn to prate by rote upon subjects which require the powers of judgment and reflection to comprehend. They repeat the ideas of others, and we are satisfied, without taking any account of their own stock. An examination into this particular, as it would most probably lead to mortifying disappointment, is very carefully avoided.

It is thus that prodigies are formed ; all of which, as far as I have been able to observe, are a species of forced plants, that upon a slight view appear fair and flourishing, but have neither strength nor flavour.

Soon would the navy of England cease to be our pride and boast, if it were built of timber from the hot-house. But although an attempt to force the growth of the sapling would be detrimental to its future strength, pains must be bestowed in removing all obstructions that might check its rise ; its roots must have room to shoot, or its branches will never expand in blooming verdure. A similar attention to the mind, in the early period of existence, appears to me to be essential towards the expansion of the intellectual powers.

I have already observed, that the faculty of perception is the first which opens in the human mind.

Though perception is a word derived from the operation of but one of the senses, it is here applied to denote the impression made upon the mind by all the objects of sense. The meaning of it, as thus applied, must be understood by every one who reflects on what he does, when he hears, sees, feels, &c. "Whoever reflects," says Locke, "cannot miss it; and if he does not reflect, all the words in the world cannot make him have any notion of it."

The word perception is likewise frequently used in a figurative sense.* But the least intelligent person must perceive the difference betwixt perceiving the letters upon this paper, and perceiving the truth of a proposition. The perceptions of an infant are equal to the one; conception and judgment are necessary to the other.

As the organs of the several senses are the inlets of perception, it must be evident, that where these, especially the important ones of hearing and sight, are wanting or imperfect, the impressions made upon the mind will be likewise imperfect. How much this imperfection is obviated in some instances, by an increased attention to the perceptions acquired by means of the remaining perfect organs of sense, is evident in those who are born deaf or blind. It is not that the organs of sight or hearing are improved by use, but that the mind, by a greater degree of attention to the impressions made upon it by one of these organs, renders its correspondent perceptions so vivid, as, in a great measure, to supply the want of that organ which Nature has denied.

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* In this sense, also, do I use the word impression, whenever it is applied to denote mental operation.

Nor is this all. As the knowledge attained by our senses is the foundation of all our intellectual improvement, we may observe that the species of attention which has been above described, frequently serves to open and improve the faculties in such an eminent degree, as to induce a general belief, that those who are born deaf or blind, are persons of uncommon endowments. If a lively attention to the impressions received from the remaining senses can, in some measure, supply the loss of one of the most important organs of perception; and if it further appears, that this extra-attention is conducive to the improvement of the intellectual faculties; my idea of the advantages to be derived from an attention to the improvement of the perceptive faculties from earliest infancy, can neither be deemed chimerical nor absurd.

"They have eyes and see not, ears have they and hear not," is an emphatic reproach pronounced in the name of the Most High by the lips of an inspired writer. Any person, in the least conversant with the world, may every day have opportunities of applying the truth of this description. Without an habitual attention to the impressions made upon the senses, the perceptions are evanescent; they are at the moment indistinct, and cannot leave any trace upon the memory, so as to become objects of reflection. Hence arise innumerable mistakes in the judgment. To this may be traced many of those falsehoods, which we are so apt to attribute to a wilful departure from truth. Indeed the evidence of people, who have never been accustomed to make their perceptions objects of attention, can never be relied upon; for without attention there can be no memory. Whoever has been accustomed to make observations upon the lower orders of

society, will agree in the justice of this remark.(B)* Were it, however, never applicable to any but those of the lower orders, it might here be passed over in silence; but alas! accurate observation is not always the concomitant of rank. The lie of the day in the upper circles does not always originate in malignity: many are the slanders, many the falsehoods, that originate in that confusion of ideas, the foundation of which is laid in the habit of inaccurate perception.

Besides its baleful influence on the moral character, there is another evil arising from this habit of inaccuracy, that deserves our most serious attention.

Every science which the human mind can pursue, every study in which it can engage, demands, as a preliminary, an attention to the objects of perception. In proportion as this attention has been rendered habitual to the mind, from the earliest stage of life, will the rudiments of science be easy, and the progress delightful. A child who has been accustomed to pay attention to its perceptions, has received, from the various objects of sense, a fund of ideas which are ready to be brought into use; these by the power of association, assist the mind in forming new conceptions. Children, who, either through the reprehensible neglect of their parents, or from some defect in their original conformation, have never made this improvement of their perceptive faculties, are, and necessarily must be, slow in comprehending any subject. They want, as it were, the first link of the chain, and have nothing whereon to fasten the new ideas with which you present them.

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* See note second at the end of the volume.

That this apparent dullness is frequently nothing more than the total disuse of that faculty of attention, without which, though the five senses be possessed in full perfection, there can be no perception, is evident from this circumstance, viz. that when such children have their perceptions quickened by attention, this apparent stupidity gradually clears away, and the intellectual faculties appear often strong and vigorous. If, however, children of this description, whose perceptions are either dull by nature, or blunted through want of exercise, and who have consequently no stock of ideas, have information forced upon them ; it is ten to one, that they will conceive such a dislike to learning, as will make them continue dunces for ever.

That it is by means of the senses that ideas are first acquired, is a fact, which, I apprehend, to be now established beyond the reach of controversy. It has, for more than half a century, been generally admitted by philosophers ; but the belief of it has, as far as I know, induced little additional attention towards that period of life, when the knowledge acquired by the senses first begins to be communicated to the mind. The reason of this neglect is obvious. Memory extends not to those years of childhood when our first ideas were acquired. We can recollect the period when knowledge was first communicated to us by others, but of our previous conceptions we have no remembrance. We therefore look upon those first years as a sort of blank in our existence, and naturally consider them as the same with regard to our children. All our pains, all our attention with respect to their minds, is therefore reserved for that period, when we think it

proper, that according to custom, they should begin to receive instruction.

It is no uncommon thing to see a mother, who has never assisted her child in the acquirement of a single idea during infancy, expressing the utmost anxiety for its learning to read. As soon as the age for tasks arrives, tasks must be given, or the child is lost! Thus is an invincible aversion to learning often inspired; while if the tenth part of the pains then bestowed had been given at a more early period, curiosity would have been awakened, and the mind would have been prepared for the reception of farther instruction. The seed that is to bring forth an hundred-fold, must be sown in good, and in *prepared* ground.

Let us now take a view of the manner in which the infant faculties unfold. It is probable, that as soon as a child is capable of fixing its eyes upon an object, it acquires some idea of the object it beholds. These must be for a considerable time very confused; the very notion of distance being one that is acquired by the mind, and not the natural consequence of sight. To a child, or to a grown person born blind, but who has by an operation been restored to sight, every object appears to press upon the eye at an equal distance;* nor is it till experience has taught the contrary, that either the child, or the restored person, can be convinced of it. This acquired perception is very gradually

* The same may be observed in all other animals. I remember being once greatly surprised at seeing a young puppy, which I had put upon the table, deliberately put its paw over, and consequently fall with violence upon the floor: I then attributed this to want of sense. But an explanation of the theory of vision convinced me, that the puppy did not perceive the carpet as a distant object. Were man to gain the use of his legs at as early a period of his life as the four-footed animals do, to what innumerable dangers would he be exposed! In this, as in all the ordinances of nature, we see the wisdom and the goodness of the Great Creator.

attained, and probably remains imperfect till the child can run about ; nor does it then extend to distant objects, few children of five or six years old being capable of making any distinction betwixt an object that is only half a mile, from those that are four or five miles distant. The same may be observed of people brought up in towns ; many inhabitants of the city of London, in respect to the perception of the distance of remote objects, remain children during life.

Ideas of the distance of objects can only be obtained by experience ; but the means of our children's experience are in our hands. When a child of five or six months old fixes its attention upon any object, it ought to be induced to view it at every different degree of distance, to examine it near, and to look at it far off ; and thus, by degrees, ideas of perception will be acquired. By some pains taken to fix these ideas in the mind, during the first two years of life, many fatal accidents might be prevented.

From the want of experience, our own notions of perpendicular distance, as far as they are obtained from the eye, are imperfect. No wonder, then, that children should be liable to so many fatal mistakes concerning it. When a child's first notions upon this head are obtained by means of a severe fall, it is apt to produce a bad effect upon the mind, by inspiring that terror, the consequences of which I have already explained at large. This passion, as I have formerly shown, continues to operate upon the mind by means of association, long after the cause that first produced it is forgotten. I have known people who dared not to look down a precipice ; nay, some who dared not look from a high window, though perfectly conscious of their

security. Is it not probable, that these false fears have originated, either in some strong impression of terror, (the circumstances attending which may be beyond recollection) or in false notions of perpendicular distance, given by a foolish nurse, by way of keeping her charge from danger ?

As soon as the sight is perfect, it must behold the objects before it. But it is not till capable of some degree of attention, that a child can have what I call a *perception* of the object. This faculty of attention begins to display itself about the third or fourth month. In thriving, lively children, it is about this period very perceptible. Delightful it is to observe this dawn of intellect in the little innocent. Caught by some lively colour, some gay appearance, the eye fixes in eager though short-lived examination, commonly ending in a crow of delight. The tone of nature ought then to be followed. Let the little creature be danced and tossed about, till both you and it are tired. But when again its grave looks denote a fixed attention, let nonsense, I beseech you, have a truce. Let the eternal bunch of keys be still ; nor endeavour, by ill-judged interruption, to break the short reverie ; but rather, by submitting, if possible, the object of attention to the touch, give two senses an opportunity of judging instead of one.

At two months old, a child is evidently capable of distinguishing betwixt a white ball, and a black or brown one. But its perceptions must have been further opened, before it can observe any difference betwixt a ball covered with white leather, and one of ivory. Every distinction which the mind can make, you may reckon a new idea acquired. It is in your power to multiply these ideas at a very early period. It is likewise unfortunately in the

power of a foolish nurse to retard the natural progress of the mind, by perpetually interrupting its attention. A child that is much danced about, and much talked to, by a very lively nurse, has many more ideas than one that is kept by a silent and indolent person. A nurse should be able to talk nonsense in abundance; but then she should be able to know when to stop.*

Good temper and activity are such indispensable qualities, that if either be wanting in its nurse, the child runs the risk of being deficient in animal spirits, or of having its temper spoiled by improper treatment. Whether what are called *animal spirits*, be the cause or the consequence of a rapid flow of ideas, it is not at present our business to inquire; it is sufficient for us to observe their inseparable connexion. Wherever the animal spirits have received a fatal check in the period of infancy, the succession of ideas is slow, and the perceptions languid. In such children we may frequently observe a premature display of the powers of reflection; but seldom, very seldom, does the unnatural maturity of this faculty produce any thing great or admirable. The laws of nature are immutable; nor can we ever expect success, if we reverse her wise decrees.

A misfortune opposite to what has been above alluded to, is sometimes the consequence of an unusual flow of animal spirits in infancy. I mean

* It has been observed to me by a lady, who, to uncommon sense and penetration, has united the advantage of much practical experience, that nothing tends more effectually to retard the progress of the infant faculties than a custom prevalent with nurses, of keeping the child in a perpetual trot upon the knee. Does the poor infant fix its attention upon an object? the knee is immediately in motion to prevent the possibility of its acquiring any idea from it. Does it show symptoms of displacency or distress? the trot goes on with redoubled velocity, till the little creature is stupified into silence.

the loss of the capability of attention. This, I believe, always proceeds from improper management in very early life; for the most lively infants make the most early display of the faculty of attention, and would no doubt continue to exert it on the objects of perception, if they were not injudiciously diverted from the attempt.

The more lively the flow of ideas, the more strongly is the mind impelled to increase their number. Hence proceeds that curiosity so remarkable in children; an engine more powerful in the hands of judicious parents, than the boasted *fulcrum* of the Syracusan philosopher. To direct this curiosity into proper channels, ought to be the unceasing object of parental care from the dawn of intellect till its maturity. In early infancy, it must be exclusively directed to the acquirement of clear and distinct notions of the objects of perception.

As soon as children acquire the use of speech, we may observe their number of ideas to increase with astonishing rapidity. As letters, when arranged upon paper, become the signs of words, so are words the signs of ideas; and as in acquiring the knowledge of letters, we must learn to associate the idea of the sound of each letter with the written character, so in acquiring the use of words, we must associate the sound of each word with the idea it is meant to express. When we give a due degree of consideration to this curious fact, we shall be astonished at the number of words which a child of three years old has acquired!

Let us see how many powers of the mind are necessary to the acquirement of every word which is the sign of a distinct idea. There must be, in the *first* place, a distinct perception of the object, which could never be obtained but by the exer-

tion of the faculty of attention; *secondly*, it must have been an object of conception; *thirdly*, of memory; *fourthly*, a considerable degree of judgment must have been exerted, in discriminating the particular sound, expressive of the idea; and *fifthly*, that sound must have been connected with the idea by the laws of association. Before the child can have pronounced the words mamma, papa, chair, table, &c. with appropriate meaning, all this intellectual process must have been gone through. How absurd is it, then, to imagine that this period of life is worthy of no attention! If the use of speech be, and to me it appears evident that it is, a means of facilitating the acquirement of ideas, some pains ought to be bestowed on the attainment of distinct articulation. It has been observed to me by a judicious friend, that children are greatly assisted in this process by teaching them, as soon as they acquire the use of speech, distinctly to pronounce the letters of the alphabet. This is seldom thought of, till children are taught their letters; their articulation is consequently seldom distinct till that period; and it may be observed, that the articulation of those who never learn to read, is seldom distinct through life.

The impressions made upon the mind through the medium of the sight are, I believe, the chief source of ideas in the period of infancy. That they are not, however, the only source, is obvious from the attention which children pay to sound: and I am led to believe, that every thing which has been said to prove the possibility of improving the perceptions of children with regard to objects of sight, may likewise be applied to the perceptions of sound. As people who are blest with good sight, must, when they open their eyes, of necessity see;

so must all who have the organs of hearing perfect, of necessity hear every noise that is made beside them. But as an object must be surveyed with some degree of attention, before it can properly be said to be perceived; so must a sound be listened to with some attention, before its degrees of intonation can be discriminated. A person who has no ear for music, hears the sound of a violin as well as the most critical connoisseur: the noise made upon the instrument is equally loud in the ears of both. To the one, it is a continued and irksome noise; to the other, when touched by a masterly hand, it emits sounds expressive of all the sentiments that can be felt by the human breast; now elevating the soul with emotions of sublimity, now melting it into tenderness. The sense of hearing is in these two persons equally acute; whence, then, proceeds this amazing difference in their perceptions?

An examination of the faculty of attention may perhaps give us some assistance towards the solution of this difficulty; though the fuller explanation of it must be reserved for the letter on taste. Where the organs of hearing are perfect, I believe, it never happens, that a person who has been early accustomed to pay attention to musical notes, is found incapable of discriminating betwixt grave and acute sounds, or of marking the number of notes in a bar, which constitutes what is called time. This is the work of attention. The pleasure derived from musical composition has another source. It is an emotion of taste; and under that head we shall examine it.

Some children appear to have much quicker perceptions than others. Where this faculty appears weak, great pains ought to be taken to in-

vigorate it. The mind ought to be won to the examination of objects by every engaging art; nor should it be suffered to rest satisfied with such a slight and superficial survey, as may convey a false impression. It is by repeated and attentive examination, that children learn to perceive the difference betwixt inanimate objects which are put in motion, and sensitive nature. Without some pains bestowed in teaching this distinction, children either learn to attach ideas of animation to mechanical motion, or of insensibility to all living objects that are inferior to the human size and figure. The first is the cause of a thousand foolish terrors, and the latter leads to many infant acts of cruelty. I have seen a child afraid of the wheels of its little chaise, when it saw them put in motion; and known the work of a great clock, or the striking of a great bell, excite emotions of terror, to an advanced period of life. Had the perceptions been in infancy exercised in examining the nature of objects, these false fears could never have been engendered.

On the other hand, if a child has not been accustomed to examine living objects, and made sensible that every thing which lives has sensation; it may amuse itself with torturing the inferior animals, till habits of cruelty are deeply implanted in the mind.

So nicely interwoven are the moral feelings and the intellectual faculties of man, that it is impossible effectually to improve the one, while the other is neglected or destroyed. In the cultivation of the perceptive faculties, we lay the foundation for that quick discernment, which is equally necessary in acquiring just notions of things, and in discovering the true path of moral rectitude. By the neglect

of these faculties we not only enfeeble the understanding, but lay the foundation of those false associations, which extend their baleful influence to the affections of the heart.

As it is by means of attention only that the perceptions can be improved, I shall proceed to a more minute examination of this important faculty in the following letter.

Farewell!

LETTER III.

ATTENTION.

The power of attention in improving the perceptions.—The velocity of its operation so great as to render it frequently imperceptible.—The influence of the passions upon attention.—Illustrations by example.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

To impress a conviction of the necessity of cultivating the faculty of ATTENTION, nothing more is necessary, than to demonstrate its being essential to the operation of every other faculty.

The senses are the organs of information to the mind; and upon their evidence the learned and the vulgar rely with equal confidence. Yet the clearness, and, in many instances, the truth of their evidence, depends upon the degree of attention that has been exerted. Where the exertion of attention has been habitually neglected, the senses lose their vigour, and the perceptions

become languid and confused ;* but where, on the contrary, the perceptions have been exercised by attention, they acquire new strength, and are brought to a degree of perfection, which, in some instances, appears quite extraordinary.

The truth of what is here advanced will appear beyond all dispute, when we consider, that people, who from their peculiar avocations, as hunters, sailors, &c. are habitually intent upon distant objects, become capable of distinctly discerning objects at such an immense distance, as totally removes them from the sight of such as have never been accustomed to make similar observations ; while on the other hand, those who have from early life been accustomed to examine minute objects near the eye, frequently become purblind. This defect evidently increases with the increase of luxury, which draws people together into cities, where children are brought up in ignorance of all the sublime objects of nature, and have their sense of sight perpetually occupied in a narrow sphere.

I am aware of the objection that may be here started, on account of the formation of the eye ; from which, it appears, that short-sightedness must be the inevitable consequence of a certain degree of convexity. But why is this convexity confined to people in certain situations ? Why does it only appear in those whose pursuits and avocations demand minute attention ? To a nat-

* It may be observed, that the lower order of servants frequently appear dull of hearing : and that without any defect in the organs of vision, they often do not see the objects before them ; nor till considerable pains have been taken, do they perceive minute differences with regard to the size and colour of objects, or whether they be straight or crooked, &c. &c.

ural defect in the organs of vision, the child of the peasant is as liable as the child of the prince; but seldom shall we meet with a short-sighted person, who has been from infancy accustomed to the observation of distant objects in the country. Does not this evince the wonder-working power of attention?

Those who enjoy the blessings of sight and hearing, receive through the medium of these senses so much information, that they pay little attention to the sense of feeling. But when a person is deprived of sight, this sense becomes so necessary towards the acquirement of ideas, that the attention is then turned towards it so effectually, as to make it appear to the vulgar like the acquirement of a new sense. The skin of my hand is as fine, the nerves are as exquisitely susceptible, as any blind person's whatever; yet on feeling the sheet of paper on which I write, with the utmost attention of which I am *now* capable, I cannot perceive any difference betwixt the part that is written, and the remainder of the page; yet this, I know, would have been instantly distinguished by a blind lady with whom I was formerly acquainted. So exquisite had ihe sense or feeling in this lady become, that I have seen her thread a fine cambric needle with the utmost ease, the aperture of which could scarcely be discerned by my eye; and so acute was her perception of quantity, that in running her hand along the front wall of a new apartment, she instantly discovered an error in placing the windows, which had totally escaped every other person. From this, and similar circumstances, I am persuaded, that by attention the sense of touch

might be made much more useful to us than it generally is.

The sense of taste is originally equal in the peasant and the voluptuary. In the peasant it remains through life simple and uncultivated; but in the votaries of luxury, it is, perhaps, the only perception that is brought to any degree of perfection. Of all our senses, this of taste furnishes the mind with the fewest ideas of reflection; the cultivation of it is therefore least essential to the improvement of our intellectual faculties. Is it not, then, lamentable, to find the attention in early and in later life, so exclusively directed to the cultivation of this sense? The person who cannot distinguish the difference of colours, must necessarily have indistinct conceptions of particular species of beauty. He who cannot extend his observation to distant objects must have his stock of ideas proportionally limited; but though a man should not be able to distinguish betwixt the different tastes of parsnip and of turtle, the number of his ideas of reflection will suffer little diminution. The same attention that is bestowed in acquiring this delicacy of perception with regard to the palate, would, in an equal degree, increase the perceptions from all the other organs of sensation. And the only reason why the habit of attention is more easily acquired in the one instance than in the others, is, that attention is in the one case stimulated by appetite, while, in the others, it has no such stimulus.

This naturally leads us to consider the operation of the passions upon the faculty of attention. This operation I conceive to be mutual; the passions

rouse attention, and attention increases passion by a sort of re-action.

By attention the existence of every passion is prolonged in an unnatural degree. Wherever the attention is necessarily divided betwixt the object of passion and other objects, its force soon diminishes. No person, who is under the necessity of earning a subsistence, is in any danger of dying either of grief or love.

Where selfishness predominates, we shall find the attention perpetually alive to every minute circumstance, that can in any wise affect the ease, health, or comfort of the person concerned ; while that which affects the ease, health, or comfort of others, is totally overlooked. Where the attention is thus exclusively turned to self, it never fails to create a susceptibility of feeling, which deceives the mind into an opinion of its own exquisite sensibility. But what is the sensibility, that is not under the influence of benevolence? Let those who pique themselves upon the possession of this amiable quality, try it by the test I have given. Let them observe, if their attention is as much alive to whatever can effect the feelings of others, as to whatever even remotely concerns themselves. Let them estimate their feelings by the manner in which they *feel* for the trouble and uneasiness they create to those around them. If attention be turned to lessen this trouble, and to alleviate this uneasiness, with as much ardour as it is engaged in lessening and alleviating what comes home to self, it will produce that legitimate sensibility, which is born of benevolence. But where self is the great, the only object of attention, sensibility and selfishness may be considered as synonymous.

By the attention which a delicate state of health demands, a disposition to selfishness is frequently produced: another proof in favour of my argument, as it shows the power which attention has over the affections of the heart. When directed towards others by pity, love, gratitude, or any of the sympathetic emotions, it increases the disposition to benevolence. When exclusively devoted to the study of selfish gratification, it augments the spirit of selfishness. Hence the necessity of teaching children to pay attention to others.

I have, in the former volume, given some instances of the operation of selfishness in those who are the slaves of terror. Let us now observe the power of this passion in quickening the faculty of attention.

The strongest facts brought forward by the advocates of *natural* antipathy all go to prove, that persons under the influence of such antipathies have a sort of instinctive knowledge of the presence of the objects of their aversion. As for instance; a person who has a natural antipathy to a cat, will immediately discover when one is in the room, even though it should be effectually hid from his sight. The same species of sagacity I once saw in a lady, who had an antipathy to dead birds. Soon after entering the parlour of a friend's house, where she went on a morning-visit, she grew sick, and instantly declared that there must be a dead bird in the room. The bird-cage was immediately examined, and poor Dicky found dead at the bottom of the cage! I at that time became a convert to the doctrine of antipathies, and should probably have remained so ever after, had I not been led to reflect on the power of attention in the seeming improvement of the faculties.

On considering this subject, it appeared to me, that if the sense of feeling can, by the power of habitual attention, convey those nice perceptions of the surfaces of body, which, to people who have not thus exercised their attention, appear astonishing and incomprehensible; why might not attention (stimulated, as it must be in these instances, by the impulse of aversion) produce a like lively perception of smell? That a person who has had his attention frequently thus directed, may be able to perceive a certain effluvia which escapes the observation of others, is no more extraordinary, than that a blind person should be able to distinguish colours by the touch.

I am too well aware of the taste for the wonderful that prevails on vulgar minds, to expect any of that description to enter into this mode of reasoning. To minds of a higher order, therefore, do I now address myself; and sincerely hope I shall one day have the pleasure of seeing the subject entered upon and pursued by those who are equal to the investigation. To men of science who are intimately acquainted with the human frame, the subject must be particularly interesting. (c)* It is they only who can determine, how far this power of attention may explain the apparent effects produced by charms, and all the long *etcetera* of fooleries, which have in every age abused the credulity of mankind. Should it appear that the wonderful cures effected by animal magnetism, tractors, and such like inefficient causes, may really be explained by the phenomena of attention, it will tend to raise the impor-

* See note at the end of the volume.

tance of our present subject. And I confess, I am the more sanguine on this point, upon considering that the efficacy of all these wonder-working charms seems entirely to depend on the *attention* of the public; and that, like the hysteric fits of fine ladies, they cease to operate the moment they cease to be observed.

Attention is not only necessary to the improvement of our perceptive, but is essential to the operation of all our intellectual faculties. How much memory depends upon it, is known to all. By habitual exercise its operation becomes so quick, as to require, in some instances, no inconsiderable degree of reflection, to make us sensible of its having actually been exerted.

Dr. Stewart, with that enlightened penetration which characterizes all his observations, has traced the operation of attention in some of those actions, which philosophers had formerly considered as mechanical. He has, I think, satisfactorily proved, that the most rapid performer in music must necessarily pay attention to every note he plays, though his attention is so evanescent as to leave no consciousness of its exertion.* I cannot pretend to improve upon his illustrations: but I may be permitted to give an example more familiar to my own sex, than those which he has adduced.

You I know can knit: and can do it so well that you may have forgot the process of learning it. Take then one of your children, who knows nothing of the matter, and in teaching her, you will observe the difficulty of the operation. The

* See Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind.

position of the needles must first be attended to; then the thread must be twisted round the proper finger; then the stitch must be lifted by the needle; then the fore-finger of the right-hand must cast the thread round the needle, which must then be returned through the stitch; and finally, the stitch must be gently dropped by the needle in the left-hand, without injury to the rest. Every one of these operations requires a separate and fixed attention: and yet by habit they come to be performed so rapidly, that we appear to give them no thought. By habit I can perform all these operations while reading a book that seems to require my whole undivided attention. According to the opinion of the justly celebrated Hartley, my mind has now no concern in this process. He would say, that the motions of my fingers "cling to one another in the way of association, the acts of volition (or will) growing less and less express all the time, till at last they become evanescent and imperceptible." But that the attention is still, however imperceptibly, engaged, is evident from this, that the moment I drop a stitch, it is taken notice of; and that, however deeply engaged in my studies, I do not forget to turn the stitch that marks the seam at every second round.

Should any grave philosopher deign to look into these pages, I will permit him to smile at this simple illustration, which he may, if he pleases, call, *argumentum ad feminam;* but if it aid my design of exhibiting the power of attention, as essential in every voluntary operation of mind or body, it will fully answer the purpose for which I intended it.

The great object of this imperfect, though perhaps too tedious, examination of the faculty of attention, is to impress a conviction of the necessity of its early and assiduous cultivation. In this we are happily assisted by that curiosity, which even in the dawn of intellect is obvious in the infant mind. When this curiosity calls forth attention, let us not counteract the wise designs of Nature; let us rather be assisting in bringing to perfection the plan which she has in a manner sketched. In the examination of sensible objects, let all the senses be duly exercised, that the indistinct ideas received through the medium of one of the senses, may be fully cleared and explained by the others.

Here is a ball of white cotton, there is one covered with white leather, and there another of ivory; not only sight, but feeling and hearing, must be exercised, before a child can discriminate the properties that constitute their essential differences. In doing this, how many powers of the mind must be employed, in all of which attention is implied as an essential?

As the sphere of observation enlarges, the objects of attention multiply on every side; upon these the judgment now begins to be frequently exercised, and the rudiments of invention appear. The most effectual aid which we can give to the progress of these powers, is to provide for their proper exercise. The child who is for ever cooped up in a nursery, and who has no other objects whereon to exercise its curiosity and attention save a few pretty painted toys, will soon have its curiosity checked, and its power of attention weakened. In these circumstances, neither judgment nor invention can be expected to

display themselves at an early period. They are both constantly anticipated by the provident care of the attendants, in whom it would be a breach of duty to let little master have the trouble of acting or thinking in any instance for himself.

Nor where the circumstances of parents happily forbid the attendance of a train of mercenary mind-perverters, are the children always permitted to reap the advantage of their situation. Too often have I beheld the budding intellect as effectually nipped by the injudicious anticipations of an indulgent mother, as it could have been by the most foolish nursery-maid. Children who are accustomed to this species of constant superintendance and prevention, have no inducement to the acquirement of those habits of attention, which I consider as the basis of all intellectual improvement.

"You can't open that pretty box, love; come to me, and I will do it for you. See! what nice comfits there are in it!" The box is opened, the comfits are eaten, and mamma again screws on the lid. Pleased with the novelty, little master again desires to have it opened, and again she complies with his request. The request, or rather command, is again repeated, and complied with; till mamma grows tired, and then she declares that the naughty box will not open any more! The ill-humour which succeeds, is stifled by more comfits from her pocket, or the poor child is coaxed to resume the string by which the painted horse is dragged round the room. All this I have seen, and similar occurrences may be now in your recollection. Let us see how the

same circumstance is managed by a judicious mother.

"Here is a pretty box, mamma; but it won't open, all that I can do."

"That box, my dear won't open by force; the lid is screwed on, and it must be turned in such a manner as to take out the screw. Observe. There! it is opened! now see how the part that fixes, is cut in the manner of a screw."

"O! yes, now I understand it; for I remember what papa told me one day about the cork-screw, when I was looking at it: but I thought there was no use of screws but to draw corks."

"All screws are made upon the same plan, or principle, as it is called; will you remember that word?"

"Yes, mamma; but what else is there besides cork-screws and screw-lids for comfit boxes!"

"Many things, my love, are made upon the same principle. A piece of furniture that is just by you, is made upon the principle of the screw; and if you will find it out, I will give you a kiss."

"I see! I see! it is the stool on which my sister sits at the piano-forte. It turns and rises just like the lid of this box."

This scene I have likewise witnessed. Does it require any argument to prove which of these children would be most likely to pay attention to the objects of perception? Can we be at any loss to determine, which would be best prepared for receiving instruction at that period when, in the minds of unthinking people, instruction commences?

As my portraits are all drawn from real life, I shall, if you please, take a view of two families brought up on the opposite principles I have here

stated. The parents of each family were equally fond of their offspring. The children were equally promising; and, had the management of their early years been equally judicious, I have every reason to believe, that the intellectual endowments of the children of each family would have been much upon a par.

Mrs. X. was a domestic character, was much at home, and always with her children. Unfortunately for them, she had conceived the idea that education was to be the work of their teachers, and that till they learned to read, they could learn nothing. To keep them out of harm's way, to amuse, to feed, and to dress them, she considered as duties; and piqued herself on giving up society in order to devote herself to their performance. For their amusement she spared no expense in the purchase of toys, her sitting-room was filled with the painted fragments of broken chariots and disabled horses. Fresh toys supplied the place of those that were demolished, and one of the active powers of the mind was thus brought forth in the love of novelty. This short-lived passion was succeeded by satiety, and satiety by disgust. If ever curiosity appeared, it was immediately respressed by those foolish answers to every inquiry that are thought *so proper* for children.

At length the appointed period for learning to read arrives. Induced by the pretty book, by novelty, and the reward of sugar-plums, the child gets acquainted with its letters. Novelty then ceases to operate; the pretty book has lost its charms, and sugar-plums are no rarity. No matter; the lessons must go on in regular course. The poor child, who never from the hour of its birth has had its attention exercised upon any object whatever, must

now attend. Without any distinct idea upon any subject, without any link in the chain of association, it must now learn to repeat words that are set down for it. It has no curiosity to be gratified ; nor, indeed, is curiosity endeavoured to be excited. But as all little masters and misses of such an age learn to read, it too must learn at all events. What is the natural consequence ? The child acquires an insuperable aversion to reading, which long operates as a bar to every improvement. That this really happens, I can aver from actual experience ; having known a child exactly thus brought up, who, at nine years of age would grow pale at the sight of a book, and at the proposal of reading would, by the fallen countenance and dejected eye, plainly evince the most deep-felt aversion.

In proportion to the vivacity or dulness of the power of conception, this aversion will be the more or less unconquerable. Where conception is languid, it will probably remain fixed for life ; and the only reading that people of this description will ever take to, is works of fancy. In those the languid imagination is aided, indolence is gratified, and the mind that is incapable of combining images for itself, enjoys a sort of childish pleasure in surveying those that are held up to it by others.

Let us now turn to Mrs. Z. the mother who taught her son the properties of one of the principles of mechanics, in unscrewing his toy. In this little incident, an example has been already given of the method she took to call the attention of her children to an accurate examination of every object that came within the sphere of their observation. Every field flower which they gathered in their walks, every pebble which they picked up in

the road, was a source of new ideas to their tender minds. Curiosity was thus awakened, turned to its proper objects, and so judiciously gratified as to lay the foundation of a love of knowledge—the first step to all improvement. Reading was taught with ease, and considered by the children in the light of a privilege, rather than a task. To keep the desire of information alive in the mind, curiosity was often but partially gratified; and full information referred to the period when the children might themselves acquire it from books.

How effectually the love of reading may be thus inspired, will appear from the following incident. The eldest little boy of a family brought up exactly as I have described, when about nine years of age was put to sleep in a room where some old books were kept in an open closet; among these was Pope's translation of the Iliad, which soon attracted the young gentleman's attention. So delighted was the boy with its perusal, that, as it afterwards appeared, he used to watch the first dawn of day, (and it was then the middle of summer) take his book into bed, and read with avidity for hours before the family were astir. This might never have been known, but for a query which he put to his mother, to whom he constantly applied for assistance in every difficulty. That which now perplexed him, might have posed more able critics; I shall give it in his own words. "Pray, mamma, said he, "what was the reason that Venus, who was quite a *true goddess*, could not make her son Æneas immortal; while Thetis, who was but a sort of *half goddess*, could confer immortality upon hers?"

Do you not conceive, my dear friend, nay, do you not *feel*, how the heart of the parent must

have thrilled at this proof of penetration and sagacity in her darling boy ? What a charming opportunity of explaining the nature of fabulous poetry ; of giving distinct ideas of heathen mythology ; and of impressing upon the mind a clear perception of the superiority of a sublimer system ! In the hands of such a mother, we may believe that such an opportunity would not be lost.

You will, perhaps, attribute all this to the effect of extraordinary genius. That this child was not a boy of ordinary capacity, I must allow ; but still I am of opinion, that had he been brought up from the cradle as the children of Mrs. X. were brought up, had his attention never been awakened to the objects of perception, had his early curiosity been repressed, and no assistance given to his mind in the formation of its ideas, his conceptions must have been necessarily so much less lively, so much less accurate and distinct, that his genius, at the time we speak of, would have been far from appearing extraordinary.

Far from considering all to be born with the same degree of intellectual capacity, I believe there are different degrees of strength and vigour in the intellect as well as the corporal frame. But let not this analogy carry us too far ; let us not imagine that the mental, like the bodily, powers, will expand of their own accord. Nature has provided for the preservation of a certain degree of strength, beauty, and proportion in the species, by ordaining that where these are greatly deficient, the race shall soon become extinct ; but the race of fools may, alas ! be multiplied without end.

The utmost care that can be bestowed on the improvement of the perishable fabric, can add but

little to its strength ; whereas the mind—the immortal, the imperishable part—is happily so formed, as to be susceptible of progressive improvement through the ages of eternity. The wisdom, the knowledge of every generation is an accumulated treasure that descends to its posterity. We in this age are born to a rich inheritance ; let us not, like prodigals, squander it upon unprofitable trifles ; let us rather put it out to interest, that the capital of the succeeding age may be increased. The surest method of effecting the increase of this intellectual stock, is to lay a foundation for the improvement of the mental powers, by an attention to their cultivation from the earliest period of their existence. For this purpose we must observe, (and the observation cannot be too often urged) that the appearance of the different faculties of the mind is not simultaneous, but progressive. We too frequently expect every thing from reason ; but if the preparatory faculties are neglected, reason will never ripen to maturity. It is they which must afford the materials on which reason is to operate. Nature has afforded a space for their exercise ; she has given time for their attaining some degree of vigour, before reason is brought forth. It is in not attending to her wise regulations, that all our errors in education originate. Let us study her laws, and in them admire the blessed provision which the divine source of all perfection has made for the happiness and improvement of His rational offspring !

Before I take leave of this important branch of our subject, I wish to propose to your consideration a few observations upon the nature of those trains of thought, which, from the first glimmerings of sense to the latest period of existence, flow through the mind in a never-ceasing current. Every article

that composes this perennial stream, has been an object of previous attention; and from its prevailing materials, every person may, upon self-examination, learn to what class of objects the attention has been chiefly directed. Joy and grief, complacency and resentment, each introduce trains of ideas of correspondent complexion. While the mind is agitated by any of these emotions, the attention cannot be turned to indifferent objects without a violent effort; and if these emotions are frequently introduced in early life, we need not expect that the effort ever will be made. Hence the importance of preserving the tender mind from the dominion of passion; hence the necessity of exerting our utmost endeavours to conquer in infancy those unruly desires arising from the gratification of self-will, which give a direction to ATTENTION unfavourable to the culture of all the mental faculties.

If the trains of thought, which in our waking hours incessantly flow through the mind, depend upon the nature of the objects to which we chiefly direct our attention, it appears of the utmost consequence to our success in education, to turn the attention to such objects as may introduce trains of thought unconnected with any violent emotion. This is the great advantage of the pursuit of science. When it fortunately happens, that the attention is thus directed in early life, the unruly passions will not gain a premature admission into the youthful bosom. Many a rural nymph might have been saved from heartfelt misery by such a knowledge of botany or mineralogy as would completely have occupied her leisure hours in retirement; while from the mere want of objects to engage her attention, the Damon or the Corydon that first presents

himself, seldom fails to become fatal to the vacant mind.

Where the attention has been early engaged in fiction, it will not, without great difficulty, be turned to realities. The cause is obvious. It is the business of fiction to excite emotion; the mind delights in this excitement; and where it is frequently produced, whatever is destitute of it will appear insipid. If, then, we would have the attention engaged in the service of the intellectual faculties, and the faculties employed in the search of truth, we must carefully abstain from introducing emotions unfavourable to our design. From the direction which is given to the power of ATTENTION, the trains of thought will derive their colouring; and the character will ultimately partake of their complexion.

On the truth of what has been here advanced, every person who reflects on the operations of his own mind, is competent to decide. No one who has been accustomed to this reflection, can be insensible of the power which the attention has over the mind, in introducing trains of ideas corresponding to the objects upon which it has been engaged. The more philosophical the mind, the closer the chain of association by which these trains of thought are linked together: but the lively and the serious, the philosophical and the unthinking, are alike liable to receive impressions from the present objects of employment. He to whom this secret of the human heart was open; He who formed the mind, and intimately knew its various propensities; foresaw the consequence of permitting the chain of ideas, naturally introduced by the business, the pleasures, and the pursuits of life, to remain unbroken. He foresaw, that by this means the heart must soon be alienated from its

Maker. His wisdom provided the remedy. "*Remember the seventh day to keep it holy*," was one of the first injunctions given to the human race: and a little reflection will convince us, how admirably this decree was suited to that law of our nature, which I have above endeavoured to explain.

If our present occupation necessarily engages our attention, and our attention introduces trains of ideas allied to its object, it necessarily follows, that, in order to recall the attention to a contemplation of whatever is remote from the general objects of pursuit, a total change of employment is the most effectual means that could possibly be devised. With the *rest* that by the Divine appointment took place on the seventh day, the ideas of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, manifested in the creation of the world, were inevitably associated. A sense of the Divine presence was thus kept alive in the mind of man; and as long as this salutary institution was duly observed, the trains of thought which it excited, failed not to produce obedience to the Divine commands. To this truth the history of the Old Testament gives ample evidence. We there see, that at whatever period the observation of the sabbath fell into disuse, the knowledge of the one true God, and obedience to his moral laws, were equally forgotten. Nor where it was observed most punctually, was the observance of any use, when the associations, that were at first connected with it, were changed into a gloomy and illiberal superstition. Such was the case at the time of our Saviour's appearance; but far from being abrogated by him, "who came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil," this institution, founded on the nature of the human mind, and coeval with its creation, must continue obligatory till the nature of the human

mind is changed. From the period of our Saviour's death, it presents associations still more interesting to the heart than the ideas of creating power. It is to us a perpetual memorial of an entrance into a state of eternal happiness; a returning festival of gratitude and joy!

Addressing myself to professed Christians, I should not have thought it necessary to say so much upon this subject, if I had not observed the erroneous ideas concerning it, which now prevail. What harm is there in doing this? what sin is there in that? is the common answer to every objection against pursuing the pleasures or the business of life on Sunday. From the scope of my argument it will appear, that the *harm* and the *sin* arises from perpetuating trains of thought, foreign to all that is of real importance to our eternal welfare. Such a total change of employment on every seventh day, as will serve to break these associations which tie our hearts to the world, and to introduce trains of thought favourable to devotional sentiment, to self-examination, to humility, and benevolence, cannot be deemed a matter of small importance; and most earnestly would I recommend it to parents to accustom their children from infancy to this change. The change of employment ought, indeed, to be so managed as to produce delight; which it will never do, if Sunday be made a day of wearisome idleness, or of gloomy restraint. Let it be a day of love; of cheerfulness, of familiar intercourse with your children. Let their little hearts be led to rejoice in Him who made them. Turn their attention to observe His goodness in the works of creation and providence. Make them sensible of the benignity which decreed a day of rest to those inferior animals, which are so useful to man: and by every

means in your power, endeavour to introduce upon the day set apart for the service of God, those trains of thought which are connected with the emotions of delight and gratitude.

It has been already observed, how far our associations are influenced by time and place. By this law of the human mind the advantages attending public worship will be sufficiently explained. Every prayer to God for divine grace to assist us in conquering the evil dispositions to which we are, alas! too prone, introduces associations favourable to virtue: and if any particular hour of the day is habitually thus employed, the return of that hour will introduce these associations to the mind. Hence the advantages of devoting the morning to religious exercises. The train of thoughts introduced by these is the best preservative against temptation.

I leave you to pursue the subject in your own reflections; and be assured, that it is worthy of far more serious investigation than has now been bestowed upon it by your friend.

Adieu.

LETTER IV.

CONCEPTION.

Introductory observations.—Mr. Locke's definition of discernment applicable to conception.—The evils arising from the want of clear and accurate ideas.—How these are to be obtained.—Conception to be exercised in early life, on the objects of perception.—Books.—Peculiarity of temperament.—The conceptions of melancholy persons languid.—Observations.

You express your apprehension my dear friend, that the investigation upon which I have entered, will appear too dry and uninteresting to the generality of female readers. I cannot, I confess, think so meanly of my sex. I cannot think, that any, who have the least pretensions to rationality, can be destitute of curiosity respecting those various powers of the mind which they are conscious of exercising. I cannot think, that such of them as are honoured with the character of mothers, can be indifferent upon a subject, their accurate knowledge of which may produce consequences of such importance to their offspring. Those, indeed, who are destitute of all feelings towards their children, except those of vanity and ambition; those whose affection is but a sort of extended self-love; may turn from an analysis of the intellectual and moral powers with disgust, for to them the study would be of no avail. Let fashion be their guide, and prejudice their teacher; but let it not be expected, that the children of such should attain excellence. No, not even in those accomplishments, to the ac-

quirement of which the best years of life are exclusively devoted.

The mother, who finds it difficult to enter into subjects that require reflection, has in the consciousness of the disadvantage under which she labours, a powerful incitement to guard against a similar obstacle to improvement in the minds of her children. Sensible, as she must be, that this inability arises from a neglect of the early cultivation of her own faculties, she will be doubly assiduous in acquirinn such illumination as may direct her to the proper path of instruction for her infant charge. In a book on education she will not seek for mere amusement; nor will she cast it aside, because it contains principles which require some degree of reflection to understand. She will go over these principles with attention; examine and re-examine them; comparing them all the while with her own consciousness, and her own observation; neither permitting herself to condemn, nor to approve, upon a cursory glance. Those who read from such motives, and with such views, will, I hope, find enough in these letters to engage their attention; while, fully sensible of the impossibility of blending much of the figures of fancy with such subjects, they will pardon the writer for addressing the judgment rather than the imagination.

You, my dear friend, and those who like you have a serious interest in the objects of our present investigation, will now go along with me in examining the faculty of conception; a faculty which attention to the objects of perception naturally unfolds, and which attention alone can bring to maturity.

Conception not only presents to the mind distinct notions of the absent objects of perception, but likewise possesses the power of combining those ideas, so as to give us distinct notions of objects we have never seen.

The ball (or clue) of white cotton that is now before me on the table, to me is an object of perception. You, perhaps, have no such object in view; but no sooner do I mention it, than you have a conception of its appearance. Neither of us, perhaps, ever saw a ball of gold thread of equal size; but both of us can conceive of it; and could conceive it, had we never seen such a thing as gold thread in our lives. By our perceptions we have obtained an idea of gold; by these, likewise, we have learned the nature of ductility and tenacity. We are told, that gold is sufficiently ductile and tenacious to be drawn out into the finest threads; and this we can conceive, although we never saw it done. Of ductility and tenacity we may have a just notion from experience, though we may be unacquainted with the terms by which these properties are expressed; but if we have no such notion, it is not an acquaintance with the terms that will lead us to a conception of the possibility of converting a piece of hard and heavy metal into flexible wire or thread.

Hence appears the importance of acquiring habits of accurate perception; since upon the distinctness of our perceptions, the clearness of our conceptions evidently depends. Attention is equally indispensable to both faculries. From an habitual want of attention in examining the objects of our external senses, arise erroneous conceptions; hence false associations are formed,

tending to mislead the judgment and pervert the reason.

That mind which can most justly and accurately reflect the images of its former perceptions, is best prepared for the exercise of all its higher faculties.

What I have here said of conception, you will perhaps think is, in some respects, equally applicable to memory. You will, however, please to observe, that there is this difference betwixt them : memory is employed upon the past, while conception includes no idea of time whatever. Without memory there could neither be conception nor judgment. It is, therefore, a faculty which certainly demands the most assiduous cultivation ; but as the cultivation of it seems to be almost the sole object of modern education ; and as rules for its improvement are to be met with in every treatise on education, I shall only touch upon it incidentally.

It appears to me, that much of what Mr. Locke says of discerning, is strictly applicable to conception. " It is not enough," says he, " to have a confused perception of something in general ; unless the mind has a distinct perception of objects and their qualities, it would be capable of very little knowledge. On this faculty of distinguishing one thing from another, depends the *evidence and certainty* of several even very general propositions which have passed for innate truths." Again ; " how much the imperfection of accurately discriminating *ideas* one from another lies either in the dulness or faults of the organs of sense, or want of acuteness, exercise, or attention, in the understanding, or hastiness and precipitancy natural to some tempers, I will not here examine ; it suf-

fices to take notice, that this is one of the operations that the mind may reflect on, and observe in itself. It is of that consequence to its other knowledge, that *so far as this faculty is in itself dull, or not rightly made use of*, for the distinguishing one thing from another, *so far are our notions confused*, and our reason and judgment disturbed or misled."

All the foregoing passage applies, I think, to the conceptions. The faculty may be in itself either dull and languid; or from habitual inattention to the objects of perception, upon which it first begins to operate, it may be inaccurate and confused. In the memory of persons whose conceptions are, from any of the above-mentioned causes, languid, and indistinct, every thing seems to be stored in confusion.

Where there is no accuracy of conception, the power of retention is of very little use. We clearly see instances of people who remember things as if it were by halves, and in their repetition of the observations or of the occurrences that have been related by others, they go on floundering from error to error, and without any intention to deceive, are perpetually guilty of the most flagrant misrepresentation. Hence arise many, if not all, of those petty strifes, jealousies, and resentments, which are most inimical to the happiness of social life.

As without just and accurate conceptions the true meaning of an author can never be discovered; to persons who labour under this confusion of ideas, reading, instead of being a source of improvement, is the very reverse. Unhappy the author, whose writings are subjected to the criticism of readers of this class! From the con-

fusion of their own ideas, they are for ever mistaking or perverting the meaning of others; and totally unconscious of their own want of discernment, they scruple not to decide and to pronounce with confidence upon what they do not understand.

The mind whose conceptions are in general clear and accurate, will not be forward in pronouncing a decisive opinion, upon a slight and partial investigation of any subject whatever: it is misconception that, in many instances, gives rise to prejudice and to injustice.

As accurate conception is alike necessary to the acquirement of knowledge, and to the practice of candour and humility, I shall make no apology for dwelling upon the subject at some length; pointing out the causes, from which, as I apprehend, a deficiency in this faculty generally proceeds; and giving such hints as may be useful to its improvement in early life.

This faculty in a particular manner partakes of the dispositions of the mind. It accords with the tone of the passions; and as these incline to the cheerful or the melancholy, the conceptions will generally be found to be lively or languid. What gives strength to this conclusion is, that upon subjects which correspond to the tone of the affections, the conceptions of the dullest person are sufficiently acute.

A selfish person, whose ideas upon every other subject are languid and confused, will have clear and distinct conceptions of all that relates to self-interest. I have known those who could not by any means be made to comprehend the simplest proposition upon any subject of science; whose

ideas of the affairs, the feelings, and the interests, of others, were so faint and languid as to be with difficulty recalled; who, nevertheless, had such clear and accurate conceptions upon whatever promised to gratify their own avarice or ambition, that they could, in these points, enter with ease into the most elaborate disquisition, pursue the most intricate chain of reasoning, or follow the longest series of calculations. It is evident from hence, that the dulness of conceptions upon other subjects was not the defect of Nature, but originated in the predominance of selfishness—an affection, which, wherever it prevails, engrosses the powers of attention.

And here let it be remarked, that in all the selfish and dissocial passions, such as envy, jealousy, rancour, &c. the flow of the ideas is dull and languid; and that wherever these passions predominate, the conceptions are never strong and lively. How great, then, is the folly of parents, who, while they wish their children to be possessed of wisdom and knowledge, pay no attention to the birth of those passions, which present the most insuperable bar to the accomplishment of their wishes!

Pride is a passion not particularly attached to any peculiar tone of disposition. It attacks the lively and the serious, the selfish and the benevolent; but its operation upon the powers of conception, in these opposite characters, is essentially different. In strong and vigorous minds, pride sometimes stimulates to the desire of knowledge. In this case it adds strength to the power of conception; attention is then exerted, and exerted with effect. By means of this passion operating on an ardent mind, the task of instruction may doubt-

less be rendered easy to the tutor. By him, therefore, whose sole object is to give his pupil knowledge, pride must be considered in the light of an useful auxiliary. To those who consider the perfection of the moral character as an object of still greater importance than the attainment of any, or even of all, the intellectual accomplishments, pride will appear in other colours; nor will they wish their children to pluck of the tree of knowledge, like our first parents, at the suggestion of a fiend!

Where pride unites itself to the timid and low-spirited, no conceptions will be found lively or vigorous, excepting such as correspond with the tone of the accordant passions. While upon such minds the recital of great and noble actions, instances of the most exalted generosity, and of the most disinterested benevolence, make little or no impression;—the conceptions are lively, with regard to the slightest indication of contempt; they are vigorous in the representation of injury or injustice; and wherever pride or self-love are concerned, they are uncommonly vivid.

Where a tendency to envy or malignity pervades the mind, the conception will be languid with regard to all that is sublime or beautiful, either in moral actions or sentiment; whilst with eagle eye it will seize on every blemish. This, as has been already hinted, is the inevitable consequence of the direction given to attention, for in that direction alone will the conceptions be vigorous.

Wisely has it been ordered by Nature, that the power of conception should appear in the mind at so early a period, as to admit of its being cultivated to some degree of perfection, before the

dissocial passions have any abiding influence in the heart. The more this faculty is exercised upon material objects in early life, the less chance will these passions have of gaining an ascendancy. The works of Nature and of art, present an inexhaustible source of ideas to those who are taught to examine them with attention: and where the attention is thus directed, the trains of thought introduced into the mind will be of an opposite nature from those which produce turbulent emotion.

The manner in which children describe what they have seen or learned affords the best criterion that I know of, whereby to estimate the strength and vigour of conception. By requiring clear and accurate descriptions, we do much more to invigorate this faculty, than by all the set lessons in the world. Children, who have never been exercised in this way, are at first at a great loss for expression; and it is no small advantage to the mind to be thus set to work for words to express the new ideas it has acquired. A little assistance may at first be not only useful, but necessary. But of assistance in this way the parent ought never to be lavish; as it is one of the greatest drawbacks upon the improvement of the infant faculties, that teachers, to save themselves trouble, tell all, and leave the children to tell nothing.

I have formerly noticed that the quickness or the slowness of the course of our ideas, depends much upon the disposition of the mind to melancholy or cheerfulness. Childhood is naturally cheerful, and the flow of ideas at that period of life is consequently rapid. Nature has wisely ordained that it should be so. The power of re-

flection by which we in a manner arrest ideas in their course, is not then brought forth ; so that at this period of life children could not avail themselves of the slower succession of ideas to increase their knowledge.

As the ideas of children are few, and as the course of these ideas is rapid, it follows that the same ideas must frequently pass through the mind. Here, likewise, I observe a wise provision made by Nature for the cultivation of the first faculties that appear, and in the cultivation of which the strength of the other faculties ultimately depends. Incapable of long and fixed attention to any object, a repetition of the same ideas is absolutely necessary to the due operation of these powers. This circumstance I believe to be very little attended to. We judge too much of the minds of children by our own ; our ideas, except when under the influence of some of the exhilarating passions, flow in slow succession. The frequent repetition of the same idea is to us unnatural, and consequently irksome ; hence we rashly conclude that it must be the same with children. We therefore injudiciously press new ideas upon them before the mind is prepared for their reception ; and by doing so, we often render inaccurate conception habitual.

Viewing the subject in this light, I consider the multitude of little books that are now given to children at an early age, as so many destroyers of their faculties. If the conceptions have not acquired vigour by being exercised on material objects, before they are employed on those emotions which it is the business of fiction to describe, I greatly apprehend that they will never be cultivated to perfection. The only books,

therefore, that are fit for children, are such as convey clear, just, and accurate ideas upon subjects to which the attention at that period ought chiefly to be directed. Nor will the books that are best calculated for aiding the infant mind in the acquirement of just ideas, be of any use, unless the ideas they give be permitted to make a due impression, which they never can do at a superficial glance.

The *half* conceptions which a child at first forms from the best book that can be put into its hands, may prove equally injurious to its mind, as the erroneous ideas conveyed by works that are less judicious. By frequent and repeated perusals it is, and by these alone, that a child can attain a clear and distinct comprehension of the meaning of even the most trifling story: nor will this re-perusal appear to a child, as it would do to us, tiresome and insipid, unless its appetite for novelty has been excited by too frequent gratification.

Observe with what delight an infant listens to the same tale that has been a hundred times repeated by his nurse, and a hundred times is heard with ever-new delight. In the limited number of the child's ideas, and in the velocity with which they pass through the mind, we may see the cause of this unsatiated pleasure received from the repetition of the same foolish tale. To these oral communications books succeed; and it would be well if both tales and books were always calculated to assist the opening faculties, to awaken the benevolent affections, to give a proper direction to curiosity, and to inspire an early love of knowledge and virtue. In the "*Evenings at Home*, or *Juvenile Budget*," all this appears to

me to be effected in its utmost extent; and I am well convinced, that the child, who, from the time of its being able to read for itself with pleasure, till its eighth or ninth year, is restricted to these books alone for its literary amusement, will, at the end of that period, be found possessed of a greater number of clear and distinct ideas, and of a greater vigour of conception, than one that has run over all the instructive and entertaining stories that were ever written for children of that age.

In speaking of the books that are *read* by children, you will please to observe, that I restrict my meaning to those which they peruse of their own accord for their own amusement. The books which they read as lessons, I consider as distinct from these. The child, who never opens a book but as a task, must have been the victim of neglect or mismanagement. Nature so strongly impels the young mind to seek the acquirement of new ideas, that if the curiosity she has implanted be entirely quenched, we may be assured that this has not been effected without some pains on our part. But curiosity, though not easily effaced, may be easily directed to low and grovelling objects; and it is not without some pains that it can be turned into those channels, where its activity will be truly useful. I have seen a little girl, whose burning curiosity no drawer that contained a piece of finery could escape; who would risk disgrace and punishment to gratify herself by peeping into the trunk or closet, which was prohibited to her approach: and who would yet evince such manifest indifference towards information of every other kind, that it was impossible to rouse in her a wish for instruction. Such is the consequence of the early direction given to curiosity.

The first step to clear and accurate conception, is the careful examination of material objects. Without this, the conceptions obtained from description must be languid and confused. Where the perceptive faculty has been sufficiently exercised, the conceptions obtained by the description of absent objects, or of the feelings and sensations of others, will be sufficiently lively, provided the language in which they are conveyed be sufficiently intelligible. So many meanings are, through the poverty of language, attached to the same word, as to be the means of occasioning much confusion in the ideas of those of riper years: and I believe it often happens, that where a false association has been attached in infancy to a word not in common use, it remains indelible to the latest period of life. I was told by a gentleman of no common endowments, that in reading to his mother when a child something concerning the patriarch, he blundered on the word *partridges*. His mother set him right, but without any explanation of the meaning of the term patriarch: so that when it next occurred, instead of venturing to pronounce it, he called out, "here mamma are these *queer fowl* again!" Again she taught him to pronounce the word, but without destroying the association that had been formed, by clear explanation; so that it continued so far to operate, as that whenever he afterwards heard the word patriarch, the idea of partridges presented itself to his imagination.

Most words that are not in such common use as to be familiar at an early period, are capable of definition: and much pains ought to be bestowed in defining them as they occur, if we would have the conceptions clear and accurate. What is said upon

this subject in "Practical Education," I would recommend to your serious attention.

Before I conclude the present letter, I must beg leave to recall your attention to one of the instances I have given of the partial and limited power of conception, in a person of languid spirits and much sensibility. This melancholy temperament is sometimes hereditary, sometimes occasioned by disease, and sometimes also is born of mismanagement in early life. From whatever cause it originates, it is a misfortune of such magnitude, as calls for our utmost exertion to prevent its progress, and, if possible, to effect its cure.

Mothers, I apprehend, are seldom aware of the important consequences which result from their conduct to beings of this description.

There is something so amiable and endearing in the gentleness which commonly attends this languor of spirits, that it naturally inspires tenderness. This tenderness is increased by that helplessness which clings to the maternal bosom for support. But if this tenderness be not enlightened and guided by reason, it will prepare a never-ending fund of misery for its unhappy object.

The inevitable effect of indulgence in generating selfishness, I have explained at large in the former volume: and as selfishness is the never-failing concomitant of the disposition above described: it follows, that it is the peculiar duty of the parent to guard against nurturing and increasing this natural tendency.

From the languid flow of ideas in the low-spirited, proceeds an indolence of mind which ter-

minates in torpid apathy. Selfishness is then the sole spring of action: benevolence may dwell upon the tongue; but no feelings, no affections, but such as are connected with self-love, ever touch the heart. Such an one finds friendship necessary to his support, to his comfort, nay to his very existence. He therefore clings to his friends with fondness; but what consolation, what comfort, what support, does he afford them in return? Does he enter with the same interest into the feelings of others, with which he expects others to enter into his? No. But this deficiency of feeling does not proceed from a want of benevolence or of attachment. It proceeds, from a want of conception with regard to every thing that does not concern self. How would many of our acquaintances start at the picture that is here drawn, if applied to themselves! Let us make a more useful application of it to those who are yet at a period of life, when the evils I have here pourtrayed admit of remedy.

In the education of children who indicate a tendency to this disposition, whether such tendency be hereditary or acquired, particular pains should be taken to lead the mind to attend to the feelings of others. Whatever services, whatever attentions they exact from others, they should be obliged in their turn to pay. If they are once permitted to imagine, that from the softness and delicacy of their dispositions, they have any right of exemption from the rule of "doing to others as they would have others do by them," they are inevitably ruined. It is essential in such cases to use every means to increase the flow of ideas. Lively and exhilarating images ought incessantly to be presented to the mind, and in-

stead of encouraging that disposition to study, which frequently appears prematurely in such persons, the mind ought to be roused to active and vigorous exertion. What ever knowledge it acquires, it ought to be made freely to communicate, for unless this be done, reading will be, to such a mind, only another mode of indulging indolence. To conquer the indolence that invariably adheres to such dispositions, every effort ought to be made. These efforts ought to be unceasing; and their efficacy will be much increased by frequently changing the attention from object to object. The variety and beauty of the material world will here be powerfully assistant to the tutor's views. While the perceptive faculties are thus exercised, the mind cannot sink into apathy, or indulge in the luxury of indolent reverie. It will by these means, likewise, acquire that command of attention which is in all cases so eminently useful.

The person who has been so happy as to have attained the power of submitting the attention to the control of will, is in possession of an infallible remedy against many of the cares, and all the minor miseries of life. He who can turn his attention to the griefs or the joys of others, will never become the prey of selfish sorrow. Even in the languor of sickness, and under the pressure of severe pain, we have known people who were capable of directing their attentions to subjects remote from self. This power over the attention is particularly difficult of attainment to the naturally timid and low-spirited. It is, however, to them peculiarly necessary: and no pains ought to be spared to put them in possession of it.

The devout affections, besides being of the utmost moment to such characters, as offering them

a source of continual support and consolation, will, if cheerful ideas be associated with them, prove essentially instrumental to fortitude. Before the devout and the benevolent affections, the disposition to selfishness vanishes, as the clouds of the morning before the radiant sun. Let the susceptibility of the mind be cultivated under these auspicious beams. Be it endeavoured to render its conceptions of the sublime and beautiful so clear and distinct, as to render the mind alive to the emotions of sublimity and beauty, as often as opportunities of calling them forth recur: and by these means, you will cultivate taste, invigorate the intellect, give new animation to the spirits, and render a character which would, by injudicious management and soothing indulgence, have sunk into insignificance, happy in itself, and useful to society.

Another and a powerful motive to the diligent improvement of the faculty now under consideration, will be found in the assistance to be derived from it in inculcating a firm adherence to truth. Falsehood is the vice of weak and timid minds. To those whose conceptions are languid and confused, it is impossible that misrepresentation can ever appear in a very atrocious light. In these misrepresentations they are utterly unconscious how far they depart from the truth, because of the truth they have no distinct idea: and it is impossible, in consequence, to convince them of the turpitude of falsifying. By obtaining clear conceptions, and by being accustomed to give an accurate account of the conceptions it acquires, the mind becomes habituated to truth; at the same time that the distance betwixt truth and falsehood becomes in such minds actually enlarged, and the difficulty of de-

parting from one to the other is consequently increased.

The confused and inaccurate conceptions of the vulgar, arising from a total neglect of this faculty in their early education, renders them for ever liable to the vice of lying. Cunning takes its rise from the same source: and though many a departure from truth may be laid to the charge of *vanity*, I believe we shall generally find, that where the conceptions are clear, distinct, and vigorous, the character will be upright and sincere.

Adieu.

LETTER V.

CONCEPTION.

Possessed in different degrees of vigour.—How it may best be cultivated in those of slow capacity.—Exemplified in a variety of instances.—Difference betwixt a memory of perception, and the recollection of ideas.—The advantage of cultivating the latter.—Illustrations.

THE greatest difference that exists with respect to intellect betwixt individuals, whose organs of perception are equally perfect, will be found to consist in the vigour or the weakness of the faculty of conception. That this faculty is imparted by nature in very different proportions to the human race, will probably be acknowledged by all who argue less from theory than experience. Like all the other intellectual faculties, it is, however, capable of so much improvement, that where it pos-

sessed but in a very moderate degree, it may, by careful cultivation, be so strengthened and improved, as to conquer the deficiency; while by contrary management, the conceptions which were naturally lively and vigorous, may, for want of use, become faint and languid.

To point out the most likely method of succeeding in the cultivation of this faculty, where it appears in a weak and imperfect state, shall be the subject of this letter; and as the hints I shall offer, are all the fruits of real observation, I feel some degree of confidence in proposing them.

The source of many errors upon this point is the vanity and partiality of parents, which will not permit them to see, or to acknowledge, even to themselves, that their children can possibly be deficient in any faculty. Willing to be deceived, they permit prattling vivacity to impose upon them as proofs of quickness of apprehension; and ape-like imitation to pass upon them for acute judgment.

When these lively prattlers advance in years, people are surprised that what they looked upon as the promise of genius, should end in dulness and stupidity. Instead of this blind and ever misjudging partiality, would it not be better for parents accurately to examine and to appreciate the faculties of their children; that so by an attentive cultivation, the barren soil, whose gaudy weeds pleased the eye and amused the fancy, might be rendered really productive, and enabled to bring its fruits to maturity?

Children of slow capacity require so much attention, such unwearied patience, such unremitting assiduity, that maternal affection is alone equal to the task. The particular attention which they require,

it were folly to expect from any less interested than a mother. But richly must the mother be compensated, who, by her judicious labours, rescues the child of her affections from the degrading state of ignorance and imbecility. When she reflects, that instead of the rational companion, the steady friend, the prudent adviser, whom she now finds in her child; the same child would, by a conduct less judicious on her part, have been doomed to grope through life in a state of helpless ignorance; enviable must be her feelings!

The mother, who, by attending to the early education of her children, gives herself a real title to the maternal character, has, in the cultivation of their faculties, a great and manifest advantage over every other preceptor.

> "She knows each chord, its various tune—
> Each spring, its various bias."

She is intimately acquainted with the progress, nay with the very number of their ideas, and thus possesses the master-key of their minds. Shame on her, who carelessly throws it aside, and indolently permits the only gate that opens to improvement, to be shut for ever!

Though the perceptions may appear quick where the apprehension is slow, yet I am inclined to believe, that in this case they will, upon examination, be found to be neither distinct nor accurate. Great pains ought, therefore, to be taken with children of slow capacity, to invigorate their perceptions. Without great pains they will not receive the same number of ideas from external objects, with children of more lively parts: and as these ideas are the foundation of all intellectual improvement, it follows of course, that where they are imperfect,

or few in number, the disadvantage can never be remedied. To call the attention to the examination of external objects, and to aid the mind in forming conceptions concerning them, is therefore of infinitely more importance in the case under consideration, than is generally imagined. The parent, who is much with her child, has this branch of education always in her power. Materials for it are ever at hand. The world of Nature, and the works of art, are equally subservient to her purpose. Let us give an instance.

Mother. "My dear, you are looking at the carpet, I see. Well, now, try if you can tell me of what it is made."

Child. 'I don't know mamma.'

Mother. "Examine it better. Feel it. Is it hard, like the floor?"

Child. 'No. It is soft, and it is prettier than the floor.'

Mother. "Its colours have nothing to do with the question; the carpet would be as good a carpet, though not so pretty a one, if it had never been dyed at all. Look at it again, and try if you can find out what it is made of."

Child. 'I now see threads in it. I believe it is made of big threads!'

Mother. "You are partly right; but are these threads made of the same materials as the thread with which I am now sewing. Come and look at it."

Child. 'No. I see there is a difference; and the threads that make the carpet, are red, blue, and green.'

Mother. "The colours are of no consequence, let us not think of them at all. Let us examine a thread of the carpet, without minding the colour:

and see, here is one; compare it with mine, and tell me where you perceive a difference."

Child. 'It is bigger and softer.'

Mother. "The softness may lead you to guess, of what it is made."

Child. 'I believe it is made of wool.'

Mother. "And what is wool? Where, or how, does it grow?"

Child. 'I cannot tell.'

Mother. "Wool grows upon the backs of sheep. It is clipped off every year with large scissors; and after being washed and carded, is spun into yarn, which you call threads."

Child. 'Well mamma, tell me more.'

Mother. "It is then sent to the dyer, who dyes one part yellow, another green, and so on. It then goes to the weaver, and he weaves it by a pattern, as you see. And now you understand that the colour is mere matter of choice or fancy; but that it is not absolutely necessary, like the wool, or the spinning, or the weaving."

Child. 'Yes. I understand all this very well.'

Mother. "Do you think you will be able to tell me this over again to-morrow."

Child. 'Yes. I could tell it all now.'

Mother. "No, not now, but I should like to hear it again to-morrow; and then we shall go and look at the sheep, and their pretty lambs; and you shall learn all about them."

All this may possibly appear highly nonsensical to those who think it is by books and tasks that every thing is to be learned. We may, however, venture to assert, that all the above conversation might be read as a lesson by a child of slow capacity, without its having the smallest conception of its meaning, or acquiring a single idea upon the

subject; while given as I have described it, distinct and accurate notions are acquired by means of the perceptive faculties. It is by these, and these alone, that the conceptions of dull children are to be invigorated; and this not without much pains and trouble on the part of the preceptor.

The difficulty which a stupid child finds in attending to the letters, the words, the stops, and the sentences, renders it altogether impossible that it should derive any new ideas from this source. While this difficulty subsists, all the little attention which it can command, will be absorbed in attempts at reading with propriety. The exertion of this attention is so disgusting to a torpid mind, as to create weariness and aversion. Nor can we wonder at this, when we consider that the perception of every letter is a distinct operation of the mind; that its sound is another, and must be associated with the figure of the letter; and that words are clusters of these associations, as sentences are of words. Where the power of conception is weak, the power of association must be proportionally defective; is it not, then, unreasonable to expect the operation of this faculty, before we have been at any pains to secure the assistance of its forerunner? And should we, by dint of perseverance, of allurement, or of coercion, succeed in making the child a reader before the faculty of conception is so far opened as to enable it to receive any ideas from what it reads, what do we gain by it? *We* may, indeed, gain the pleasure of *thinking*, that the child makes some progress in learning; but in reality *it* gains nothing; of progress, it makes none.

While the learning to read is thus operose, I should think it better not to attempt it; nor deem

it any loss if the child should remain ignorant of its letters, even for two or three years beyond the period, when children of a more ready apprehension may be taught to read with fluency and precision.

If, indeed, in the interim, it learns nothing; if the mother indolently acquiesces in the slow growth of its faculties, and instead of being actively assistant in their development amuses herself in the prattle of words without meaning, the child will be little the better for procrastinating the period of books and tasks. But if, instead of forcing the backward plant, she zealously endeavours to enrich the soil, her pains will be amply repaid. By a careful cultivation of the perceptions, by rousing indolence, and stimulating curiosity, the mind will be gradually expanded for the reception of new ideas. The easier branches of natural philosophy, and the simple principles of mechanics, will be found excellent assistants in opening the mind; and you may take it for granted, that a child of slow parts will be much more advantageously employed in learning the nature and properties of the objects around from the lips of a sensible and affectionate parent, than in ineffectual attempts at learning the *signs of words*.

Children are all, in some degree, imitative animals; but as the intellectual powers develop, as the number of ideas increases, as the attention is awakened to an examination of the works of art and Nature, and as judgment begins to be called into action, the principle of imitation is diminished, or appears to be so, as it comes under the direction of judgment. The child of slow parts, to the improvement of whose faculties no proper attention has been paid, will remain a merely imitative crea-

ture during life. By imitation it will learn the use of words, and, if it is much in company with grown-up people, of words, that are not usually found in the vocabulary of children. One cannot but smile to observe, how easily parents are deceived by this quality of imitation in their children. While the sententious observations of the little prater, strike an intelligent observer with pity and disgust, they listen to the infant oracle with complacency and delight! Affectation is the never-failing consequence of this; affectation, which not all the graces and accomplishments can render tolerable, is thus united with folly and ignorance! The poor child remains unconscious of this union; it is destitute of conceptions whereby it can apprehend the incongruity; and where the conceptions are very dull, the nice feelings of propriety cannot exist.

It is by a lively sense of the impressions which our words and actions make upon others, that our manners are chiefly formed. Those who have not a lively perception of what those feelings are, must be for ever erring against propriety. How many admirable sketches upon this subject have we from the inimitable pen of Shakspeare! Hotspur's description of this species of impropriety in a self-conceited coxcomb has never been equalled, and can never be excelled. The passage is too long for insertion; and is besides so well known, that it will be immediately recollected by the greater number of readers.

Another striking instance of the same want of conception with regard to the impression made upon others, is given in the following passage, which, as an elucidation of my remarks, I shall beg leave to transcribe. The scene is in the "Merry Wives of Windsor," when Anne Page enters to

inform Slender that dinner waited for him ; to which he replies :—

Slen. No, I thank, forsooth, heartily ; I am very well.

Anne. The dinner attends you, sir.

Slen. I am not hungry, I thank you, forsooth. Go, sirrah, [to *simple*] *for all you are my man*, go wait upon my cousin *Shallow :* a justice of peace may sometimes be beholden to his friend for a man. I keep but three men and a boy *yet*, till my mother be dead ; but what though, yet I live like a poor gentleman born.

Anne. I may not go in without your worship ; they will not sit till you come.

Slen. I'faith, I'll eat nothing ; I thank you as much as though I did.

Anne. I pray you, sir, walk in.

Slen. I had rather walk here, I thank you : I bruised my shin t'other day playing at sword and dagger with a master of fence, three veneys for a dish of stewed prunes ; and, by my troth, I cannot abide the smell of hot meat since. Why do your dogs bark so ? be there bears i' th' town ?

Anne. I think there are, sir ; I heard them talk'd of.

Slen. I love the sport well, but I shall as soon quarrel at it as any man in England. You are afraid, if you see the bear loose, are you not ?

Anne. Aye, indeed, sir.

Slen. That's meat and drink to me now ! I have seen Sackerson loose twenty times, and have taken him by the chain : but I warrant you the women have so cried and shrieked at it, that it past ; but women, indeed, cannot abide them, they are very ill-favoured rough things.

Do we not see in this lubberly blockhead, all the marks of a weak and spoiled child, who had been encouraged by the good lady his mother into an idea of his own importance? Destitute of all conception with regard to the impressions that his discourse would make on a polished or intelligent mind, the means he takes to convey an idea of his consequence, of his wealth, his courage, and his delicacy, all tend to make him truly ridiculous. Not more ridiculous, however, than we have seen many a foolish miss, in endeavouring to give an opinion of her sensibility by the expression of silly fears; of her delicacy, by bombastical sentiment; or of her wisdom, by delivering out-of-place opinions with a decided and consequential air.

Persons whose conceptions are naturally dull and weak, must inevitably be exposed to all this ridiculous deportment, if great pains be not taken to prevent the species of self-imposition that gives rise to it. It is, therefore, highly incumbent upon those who have the guardianship of children of slow capacity, to use every means of awakening their attention to the feelings, rather than to the manners, of others. To discourage gross and palpable imitation, to inspire modesty, and to promote that simplicity of manners which is its inseparable companion.

We may endeavour to do this by lessons; but the attempt will be vain, the labour fruitless. We may lecture upon propriety for ever; but where the conceptions are so dull as to impart no intuitive feeling of the conceptions of others, affectation and formality will be the result of all our pains. The behaviour of children who have been thus lectured into good breeding, is always stiff and formal; and the difficulty of changing habits that are thus formed

is so great, that the ridicule of companions is, perhaps, the only means by which a change can be ever afterwards effected.

It is not by lectures, therefore, that the manners of such children as we now speak of, (or indeed of any children) ought to be formed. Children that are quick of apprehension will imperceptibly form their own ; but those of a contrary character ought to be made sensible of every impropriety at the moment of committing it. If this is done from a very early age, habits of propriety will be early formed : so that they will neither offend by rudeness, nor disgust by formality and affectation. No habits will, however, be of any avail in regulating their conduct according to the laws of prudence and decorum in after life, but in proportion as the faculty of conception has been opened and improved. Upon this the taste, the judgment, and all the intellectual powers alike depend.

A young person will naturally seek the society of those whose conversation it has faculties to comprehend. The tattle of the vulgar and the illiterate come within this description, the vulgar and illiterate will therefore be the chosen companions of the hours of relaxation. Hence low cunning, disguise, hypocrisy, and all the little meannesses which render a character detestable and odious. And all this may be the result of that blind partiality and self-indulging indolence, which either will not see the deficiency of a child in intellectual endowments, or seeing, will not take the trouble to remedy !

By timely attention in very early life, every thing short of idiocy may be improved. Gentleness, patience, and assiduity, are indeed all essential to the due performance of the important task ; but by gentleness, patience and assiduity, I have seen

wonders performed upon minds which were apparently in a state of the most hopeless imbecility.

It is absolutely necessary in this case, for the tutor to subdue all quickness of temper, all irritability of feeling; for by these the stupidity of the pupil will inevitably be increased. It is easy to conceive what a wretched tutor such a character as Rousseau must have made to a lad of slow parts; we accordingly find, by his own accounts, that he left his pupils more stupid than he found them.

It at first view appears extraordinary, that where the power of conception is very dull, the memory should, with respect to some things, be tenacious; while, with respect to others, it is altogether deficient. A very slow child will often be found to get lessons by heart as soon as, nay sometimes sooner, than one who is ten times as intelligent. But let such time elapse, as that the *words* of the lesson are forgotten by both, and then examine them upon its substance; you will then find, that the child of slow conception has not one idea remaining upon the subject; all is obliterated, as completely as if the lesson had never been heard of. The child of quick capacity, on the contrary, though it has likewise forgotten the exact words, remembers something of the meaning which they conveyed. Does not this clearly prove, that the memory of the first was entirely confined to its perceptions; while the second, who had exercised upon the subject of its lesson some degree of conception and judgment, could recall the ideas conveyed by those when the particular sounds of the words had escaped the memory.

From the foregoing and similar observations, it appears to me, that memory may be divided into two distinct branches, as it is employed on the objects

of perception, or on the conceptions. It is with diffidence that I risk an observation, in which I am not (as far as I know) supported by any philosophical writer; I would, therefore, have what I say upon the subject considered merely in the light of a suggestion worthy of examination by the instructers of youth.

Mr. Locke says of memory as follows: "Memory, in an intellectual creature, is necessary in the next degree to perception. It is of so great moment, that where it is wanting, all the rest of our faculties are in a great measure useless; and we in our thoughts, reasonings, and knowledge, could not proceed beyond present objects, were it not for the assistance of our memories wherein there may be *two defects*. *First*, that it loses the idea quite; and so far it produces perfect ignorance. *Secondly*, that it moves slowly, and retrieves not the ideas that it has, and are laid up in store, quick enough to serve the mind upon occasions. This, if it be in a great degree, is *stupidity*; and he, who through this default in his memory, has not the ideas that are really preserved there, ready at hand when need and occasion calls for them, were almost as good be without them quite, since they serve him to very little purpose. The dull man, who loses the opportunity whilst he is seeking in his mind for those ideas that should serve his turn, is not much more happy in his knowledge than one that is perfectly ignorant."

Again. "This faculty of laying up and retaining the ideas that are brought into the mind, several *other animals* seem to have to a great degree as well as man. For, to pass by other instances, birds learning of tunes, and the endeavours one

may observe in them to hit the notes right, put it past doubt with me, they have perception, and retain ideas in their memories, and use them for patterns. For it seems to me impossible, that they should endeavour to conform their voices to notes, (as 'tis plain they do) if they had no ideas."

It appears to me, that the former of the above quoted passages, viz. the account of the peculiar defects of memory, applies exclusively to the memory of our former *conceptions*, and that the want of the power of recalling them is, in all these instances, owing, not to the weakness of memory, properly speaking, but to the weakness of the faculty of conception. The languid and confused ideas that are received upon any subject by a weak mind, must be easily obliterated. They are, like our morning dreams, vivid for a moment, but which fade imperceptibly away, "nor leave a wreck behind."

What this illustrious author has observed of the memory of animals in the last quoted passage, is, I think, entirely applicable to that memory of our perceptions, betwixt which and the memory of our conceptions there is, as I apprehend, a specific difference. Idiots and brutes remember the impressions made upon their senses, as well as the persons of enlightened intellect. (D)* With these impressions the ideas of *time* and *place* are powerfully associated. The horse never fails to remember the spot, where he beheld the object which startled him: nor does the little turnspit dog forget the hour which calls him to duty: yet neither the dog nor horse have clear conceptions of the objects which they thus appear so perfectly to recollect.

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* See note at the end of the volume.

With all the attention paid to the cultivation of memory in modern education, I am afraid that, upon strict examination, we should sometimes find, that it is the memory of perception alone which our endeavours tend to improve. Useful, without doubt, this branch of memory is ; and as it comes to maturity with the first of the faculties which the human mind displays, it may be effectually employed, before the conceptions are sufficiently vigorous to give exercise to the other. But let us not expect more from the memory of perception than it is calculated to produce. Let us not continue to bestow our sole attention upon its cultivation, after the period that the higher branch of memory has power to operate. As it may be of importance to point out the consequences of this error, I shall beg your attention to the following remarks.

That words are a medium by which ideas or conceptions are communicated to the mind, must be admitted on all hands. Every word is certainly either significant of some idea in itself, as are nouns and adjectives ; or serves to connect ideas, as we see done by prepositions and participles. But we all know the sound of a word to be one thing, and its meaning to be another. With very little trouble, a person of clear perceptions may learn the Greek alphabet, and acquire the proper pronunciation of Greek words ; but if he knows not the ideas of which these words are the signs, I cannot see that he is one whit the wiser.

I may read one of Sir Isaac Newton's profoundest problems as well and as distinctly as the mathematical professor at either University ; but while destitute of all corresponding ideas, while without a link whereon to fasten the chain of reasoning, I can neither form, nor retain, an idea upon the sub-

ject. Do I strive to recollect the subject, I find nothing but a confused heap of ideas, which are the faint images of the appropriate meaning of the words, as I have heretofore been accustomed to apply them; but nothing wherewith to associate them, so as to make sense upon the subject. I may, nevertheless, commit the problem to memory, for memory will retain the ideas of perception; and I may either do this by means of attentively looking at the words, or by repeating them aloud, till the perception is sufficiently strong to become an object of memory. In either case, I shall be equally assisted in my task by the arrangement of the words; as the way in which the words stand with regard to each other, associates the idea of each word with that which follows it, whether this association be made by means of the eye or the ear. Well, after all this trouble, how much do I know of Newton's problem? Have I one more idea upon the subject of mathematics, than I had before I began to learn it? Surely, no. Go, then, and ask your little boys and girls, when they come from school, what ideas they have upon geography, history, arithmetic, &c. for exactly in the same way as I have here described, are these sciences taught to children, while their powers of conception are not yet sufficiently opened to receive ideas upon subjects far less abstruse.*

* The following anecdote I had from a gentleman of blunt manners, but great goodness of heart, though being himself a bachelor, he could not, perhaps, enter into the maternal feelings, as many of my readers will do. Being once on a visit to a fond mother, he found her entirely occupied by the extraordinary attainments of her little girl, whom she represented as a prodigy of genius. "Be so good, now, my dear sir, as to ask her any question in geography, or any question that you please, and you will find how well she will answer it. Come, love, this good gentleman is going to ask you a question." The child advanced, and the gentleman not willing to embarrass her by any thing difficult, and

Let us now proceed with my illustration, and suppose, that after having got the problem by heart, such a length of time should have elapsed, as effaced all remembrance of the words and their relative position. Once lost, the memory of them must be lost for ever. For there is this difference betwixt the forgetfulness of a thing that has once been distinctly conceived, and the forgetfulness of what we have merely learned by eye or ear, that though the former may not be ready at our call, it is nevertheless in the mind, (though in a dormant state) and will be found to be so on accurate research; while the latter is not only faded, but totally obliterated. Hence it would never be in my power, to the end of my days, to recall the problem I had so learned. But let us suppose, (and I sincerely wish the supposition could be realized) that I had regularly learned the elements of mathematics, and been enabled to go on, step by step, from problem to problem, having all along the most accurate and clear conceptions of the whole. The new ideas which I should in that case have received from the problem in question, would then have been but an addition to the foregoing chain, and would have added no less to its solidity than extension. The terms in which these ideas were communicated, might fade from my remembrance; but the ideas themselves would remain engraven on the tablet of memory for ever.

Ideas which the mind has thus received, arrange themselves in order (figuratively speaking) with

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wishing to get quit of his new office of task-master as soon as possible, after a little hesitation asked her, "Where was Turkey?" "Out in the back yard with the young poults," replied the child with great simplicity. "The very best answer," returns the gentleman embracing her, "that any child of five years old in the world could give to the question."

ideas of the same class : with these they become associated, and it is by means of this association that they are recalled at pleasure. Frequently, indeed, may they be recalled, when the source from which they were derived is lost to our remembrance.

People who are not aware of these laws of arrangement and association, are frequently disheartened, on finding how little of that which they have even read with the utmost attention, is accurately retained by the memory. But let not such people be discouraged : since they may certainly be assured, that if their conceptions of the subject have been clear and distinct, and that they have given them that degree of attention which is essential to memory, the ideas they have received, will never be totally lost. They will be mingled with other ideas, and with them be recalled, as occasion offers.

While the faculty of conception remains uncultivated, the memory even of the objects of perception must be in many instances defective.

The obvious assistance which the memory receives from the association of ideas,has induced some philosophers to explain the phenomena of memory entirely upon that principle.* Be that as it may, we are all sensible of its present operation ; and we must likewise be sensible, that the greater the number of our ideas, the more materials will the laws of association have to operate upon in our minds. These ideas are like so many pegs,† on which to hang the new ideas we receive. Where the pegs are weak, or few in number, little will be hung up, all will fall down into the abyss of forgetfulness.

* See Hartley.

† As Plato had his cave in the mind, and Mr. Locke his dark room, I don't see why I may not drive up a few pegs in it. Placed by my feeble hand, they can do no injury. Whereas, had an ancient philosopher made use of such a figure, the world might have gone by the ears, about their length and dimensions.—*See Berkeley and Hume upon ideas.*

Now those whose memory is chiefly employed on objects of perception, are exactly in this predicament; there are no pegs in the minds of such, whereon to hang their new ideas, but two, viz. time and place: these are the only associations which assist the memory of the vulgar. Events which produce in enlightened minds a series of useful reflections, serve with them no other purpose but to recall some former period, when something similar occurred.

"Yes," says the steward, "I remember when I was at my Lady Shrewsbury's,
Such a thing as this happened, *just about the time of Gooseberries.*"
Swift.

Shakspeare gives many admirable instances of this species of association in vulgar characters, and to these I refer the reader.

If the remarks which I have ventured to make, are admitted to be founded in truth, it evidently follows, that the cultivation of that branch of memory which belongs to perception, will have no influence in expanding the powers of the mind. That it is only by cultivating and improving the faculty of conception that this can be accomplished: and that while this is unattended to, the whole Encyclopedia may be got by heart, without giving any more ideas to the pupil, than if he had been all the time employed in repeating the letters of the alphabet.

Is, then, the cultivation of the memory of perception, a matter of no importance? Ought memory never to be exercised, but upon subjects which children can fully comprehend? To these queries I shall take a future oportunity of giving a satisfactory answer: and shall leave you for the present to reflect upon what has been already advanced.

Adieu.

LETTER VI.

CONCEPTION.

Lively tempers particularly liable to inaccuracy.—How this fault is to be obviated.—The proper exercise of memory in early life considered. Illustrations.

Before I proceed to make any further observations upon the subject of memory, I shall take notice of the third cause assigned by Mr. Locke for that imperfect discernment, (or conception) which renders the mind incapable of discriminating ideas one from another; namely, *the hastiness and precipitancy natural to some tempers.*

I have formerly had occasion to observe, that the rapid course of ideas in the minds of the lively and vivacious is inimical to attention; and that without attention there can be no accurate perception, no memory, and consequently no discernment. It is, therefore, to dispositions of this cast, of the utmost importance, to acquire the habit of commanding attention in early life. In proportion to the vivacity of the disposition will be the difficulty of acquiring this habit; and in proportion to the difficulty is the necessity of making the attainment.

This subject will rise into importance when we consider, that it is entirely owing to a want of proper attention to it during the early part of life, that genius is so often rendered not only an useless, but a baneful gift. Minds which eagerly catch at new ideas, without accuracy, without discrimination, will be for ever liable to misconception: they will be

ardent in error, and alike precipitate in conduct as in judgment; they will act, as they assert, with rashness and presumption. They may acquire knowledge, but wisdom will not be the result of the acquirement. They may be brilliant, but they will never be useful.

The first misfortune to which children who have this natural quickness of parts are commonly exposed, is vanity: and no sooner is vanity engendered, than a fresh stimulus is given to that rapid succession of ideas, which is for ever at war with sober and fixed attention. Vanity is, in minds of this cast, easily called forth: it is congenial to the disposition, and requires but the transient breath of praise to blow it into a flame. Let us beware, then, lest in the warmth of our admiration at the quickness of capacity, we render it incapable of strength and vigour. The eye that can discern objects clearly and accurately, is of much more value than that which takes in a number at a rapid glance, without any distinct discernment of their various distances and proportions. While the former power remained defective, it would be of little consequence that the latter was, by the use of stimulants, so far increased, as to enable the eye to see at once a still greater number of indistinct and imperfect images. To give perfection to the sense of sight, we must be able to perceive objects clearly and distinctly, as well as quickly. And just so it is with the mind; which, if destitute of the capability of discrimination, will reap no advantage from the number of imperfect ideas with which it is stored.

Instead of stimulating these quick and forward dispositions to the acquirement of new ideas, we

ought to bestow the utmost pains in checking the rapidity of their thoughts; and in discouraging the hastiness of their conclusions. While the slow ought to be led with gentleness, these ought to be made keenly sensible of every error; especially when these errors have their source in the rashness of confidence, and the presumption of self-conceit. They ought to be made to see and to feel the advantages of attention, and every opportunity should be seized for bringing the disadvantages arising from a want of attention, home to their feelings. A seemingly quick apprehension of what they learn, ought never to be accepted. They must be made to view every subject in every light of which it is capable, and to examine it in all its parts, so as to acquire not only lively, but distinct and true notions concerning it.

Habits of accuracy and arrangement are of such importance to these volatile spirits, that they ought to be carried into every part of their business; and on no pretext to be dispensed with. Their employments, their amusements, their hours of meals, of dressing, and of relaxation, in short, the whole of their time, ought to be under the strict invariable rule of discipline. There is an eccentricity attending these characters, which, without constant attention, will be perpetually flying off into some extravagance: and if this be much indulged, we may bid a long adieu to all improvement.

Attention and arrangement are what these minds peculiarly stand in need of; and every thing that can contribute to the acquirement of these necessary habits, is to them of the utmost consequence. We may be certain that the desultory will come to perfection in nothing. Every rule with regard to the employment of time which is strictly adhered

to, is one step towards acquiring these habits of arrangement in our ideas, of which I have already explained the necessity and use. It is here, and only here, that schools have, in general, an advantage over private tuition, especially with regard to females. The mother who, for want of proper arrangement of her own plans, permits the household economy and the reception of visiters to be for ever interrupting the course of her instructions, need not expect that much benefit from them will ever result to her children. It is of little consequence how these chasms are filled up: by the indolent they will probably be spent in sauntering idleness, and in frolicksome mischief by the vivacious; but they will prove alike injurious to both.

The cultivation of every faculty is attended with a considerable degree of effort; and effort does not cease to be painful until it is relieved by habit. Where the effort is subject to irregular interruptions, it will continue to be for ever painful, and will consequently be avoided as much as possible. It ought to be the peculiar care of the preceptor to render these efforts easy by confirming them into habits; which cannot be done but by perseverance.

Every difficulty will be smoothed by the habit of attention; but the habit of attention must be the effect of many painful efforts in the quick and lively, as well as in the slow and dull. Very different, however, are the means to be used, in exciting these opposite characters to the effort of attention. In the languid, we must awaken the dormant spirit of curiosity; we must endeavour to animate the spirits, to enliven the vivacity, and to increase the flow of ideas, by all that is cheerful and exhilarating. When the mind is in this train, the attention may, with ease, be turned to the examination of objects from

which new and useful ideas are to be received. But let not the attention be worn out. Let it not, in such subjects, be ever stretched to the point of weariness; or the mind will again sink into torpidity.

To fix the attention of the volatile and precipitate, a very different course must be pursued. We must begin at a very early period to demand accuracy in the examination of objects. We must bring the spirits under the subjection of authority, by enforcing a ready and implicit obedience. Instead of seeking, as in the other case, to exhilarate the spirits, by presenting a variety of cheerful images to the mind; we must use our utmost endeavour to allay their effervescence, without injuring the temper, or repressing cheerfulness and vivacity. We must accustom them, as soon as possible, to a moderate degree of restraint; and, above all other things, we must endeavour to subdue the pride that is congenial to such tempers, and in its place to plant the grace of genuine humility. If we succeed in this, we shall have rendered the effort of attention not only possible but easy; and then it will be our business to direct it to the acquirement of just, clear, and accurate conceptions.

The faculty of conception in these two opposite characters, and the different methods to be observed in improving it, may be compared to the process of crystalization in some chemical experiments. In these it sometimes happens, that in one instance the solution must be stirred and agitated before a single crystal will appear; while in mixtures of an opposite nature, the fermentation must be made to subside, and all must be rendered calm and still, or the particles will never coalesce.

The very opposite methods that are here described as absolutely necessary towards remedying

the opposite causes of imperfection in the faculty of conception, can evidently never be attempted but in domestic education. Wherever numbers are to be educated together, one rule, one system, must serve for all. There the half-formed conceptions of the quick, and the non-conceptions of the slow, pass equally current. The same task is got by both : the same routine of lessons, the same exercises of memory upon words without ideas, falls to the lot of all. The consequence is, that the hasty and precipitate become prejudiced and superficial, and that the slow and languid remain indolent and ignorant.

To children of keen and lively perceptions, it is of the greatest consequence that the preceptor should be quick and penetrating : and to all who are engaged in the education of youth, it is absolutely essential that they should be able instantly to discern the degree of accuracy of the conception formed in the mind of the child, on whatever subject it may be engaged.

Indolence and partiality are insuperable obstacles to this discernment. These will always accept of a "yes," or "I understand it," from the pupil, as sufficient proofs of clear and accurate conception ; while to a less partial or more discerning spectator, the countenance will betray the absence or the vacancy of the mind within.

A good lady I once knew, who devoted much of her time to the instruction of the ignorant. It happened that I was by one morning when one of the little *protegées* was reading to her in the Bible. The subject was the taking of Jericho. At every time that Joshua marched round the walls, a pause was made, and a lecture given by the good lady on

the wonder-working power of Providence; of which I evidently saw her little auditor understood not one word. At length the trumpets sounded, and "now, Betty, now you will see how the walls of this wicked place will fall at the prophet's voice!"

I here begged leave to speak. "Pray, Betty, what was Jericho? was it a man, or a woman, or a place, or what?"

"I believe it was a woman, ma'am," returned Betty, with great *sang-froid*.

I make no doubt that instances may at this moment occur to your recollection when, upon such *mal-apropos* examinations, answers would have been returned as little satisfactory to the preceptress as that I have above related. Nay, it is more than probable, that if you have ever chanced to be present when a book beyond a common novel has been read aloud to a company of ladies, or above all, if you have ever attended a philosophical lecture, you may possibly have had occasion to remark the formation of conceptions no less erroneous and incongruous.

This most essential difference may ever be observed betwixt those who have early been accustomed to clear and distinct ideas, and those who have been in the habit of receiving inaccurate and superficial ones: that on a subject equally new to both, the former will examine and inquire, and be thoroughly informed, before they profess belief; whereas the latter catches at the first idea, right or wrong, and confidently asserts belief, before there has been time or proof to afford conviction.

It is in early life only, that this rashness will admit of cure. In early life, therefore, its cure ought to be assiduously endeavoured; and few more effectual remedies will be found than frequent morti-

fication. This mortification is so severe a punishment to an ardent mind, that to avoid it, it will willingly submit to the painful effort of attention. Mortification must, however, be administered with a cautious and judicious hand ; else it will harden the mind, instead of humbling it. It must be made to result from a sense of its own precipitancy, and led to perceive, of its own accord, where that precipitancy plunged it into error ! and by tracing back its steps, it will lose much of that self-confidence, which is the great bane of youth in modern times.

That much of the self-sufficiency and arrogance, which is so often, and alas ! so justly complained of by the observing moralists of our age, may be traced to the source of a superficial education, I, for my share, have no doubt. By learning a little of many things, without acquiring just and accurate ideas upon any, they in fact learn nothing but conceit and presumption. Having never been made to feel the necessity of acquiring clear and distinct conceptions upon whatever subject engaged their attention, they are unconscious of their deficiency. They conceive not the confusion that reigns in their minds ; but conscious of having some ideas upon subjects with which those they esteem the vulgar and the ignorant are altogether unacquainted, they pique themselves upon this fancied superiority, and imagine, poor things ! that they know all things ; when, in fact, they know nothing.

When a mind of quickness and vivacity has been thus accustomed to the reception of half-formed images, it will never submit to the control of judgment, nor cultivate the faculty of reflection. These higher powers of the mind will lie for ever dormant ; and the sole guidance of conduct will be submitted to the impulse of feeling. The conse-

quences of this I need not pourtray ; they are, alas ! too glaring, and occur too frequently, to stand in need of animadversion.

If these things are true, it will appear to us evident, that to cultivate the faculty of conception, so as that all the ideas are clear, distinct, and accurate, is a matter of the first importance ; and that the consequences resulting from a due attention to this material point, will be infinitely more beneficial to our pupils, than any they could reap from multiplying the objects of study at an early age. A child should in fact, have no more to learn than it can learn well. All rules for beginning this or that branch of science are nugatory and absurd. The object which ought to be for ever in the parent's eye, and to which all endeavours ought to be directed, is the perfecting all the powers of the mind in such a manner, as that when the period of maturity arrives, they may all be employed in promoting the happiness (the temporal and eternal happiness) of the individual, and of society. The education that tends not to this end, is worse than labour lost. It perverts the intentions of Providence, by preventing the expansion of the intellectual faculties ; it buries the most precious gifts of Heaven ; and, by sowing the seeds of pride and presumption, it scatters vice and folly throughout the world !

I may be thought very bold in attempting to overturn the established laws of fashion ; those laws by which the generality of parents are guided in the system of education. But however submissive to her decrees in subjects of taste, I have been early taught, that neither reason nor conscience ought to yield to her authority.

In my opposition in the present instance I happily do not stand alone ; I am blest in a coadjutor who has wielded against the system of modern education the bright weapons of wit and eloquence, enforced by the strong arm of truth and reason.* All I can advance upon the subject, will prove an illustration of the justice of her observations ; which may, in their turn, serve as a comment upon mine. She pourtrays the consequences, I trace the cause of the evils of which we mutually complain. The giddiness, the frivolity, and the superficialness, which she so well describes, would never have been engendered in the youthful mind, but by an education which, instead of endeavouring gradually and effectually to develop the faculties, according to the order described by nature, has set nature and common sense at defiance ; and, regardless of their laws, has vainly aimed at giving an artificial maturity, a seeming fecundity in ideas, where, in reality, all is waste and barren.

When little miss or little master, come home from school, we are stunned by the recital of their accomplishments. They are all skilled in languages, and expert in science ; all equally favoured by the Muses and the Graces. Nothing can equal the delight which a benevolent mind experiences in the contemplation of such perfection ! "How rapidly," it is inclined to think, "must knowledge and virtue be diffused throughout the world, when these tender blossoms of wisdom shall have ripened to maturity ! See the blest effects of strewing the path of learning with flowers ! What formerly cost years of attention and perseverance, is now accomplished in less than as many months. Surely,

* See Mrs. More's Strictures on Female Education.

surely, we have very much improved upon the method of our forefathers; and of these improvements the next generation will taste the happy fruits."

Yes, my friend, we have improved upon the wisdom of our ancestors, pretty much in the same manner, as he who would exchange an oak wood for a grove of Lombardy poplars: and if we lay aside all idea of durability, strength, and utility, the young poplar will, I acknowledge, claim the preference. But when we come to apply the one and the other to useful purposes, we shall have no reason to think ourselves gainers by the exchange.

Every thing in nature teaches us, that whatever is intended for strength and duration advances by slow degrees to maturity. The human mind in this respect, obeys the same laws as the material world; and as nature, though slow, is ever operative and vigilant, we surely ought, when we attempt to act the part of her assistants, to follow her plan, and be guided by her example. Each faculty of the human mind she opens one after another, and intrusts to our fostering care. These, as she successively presents them, we ought vigilantly to improve. The perceptive powers come first, then attention, memory, and conception: with these are joined as much of the faculty of judgment as is necessary to bring these other faculties to some degree of perfection, and no more. When they are perfect, judgment and imagination display themselves, and lead to abstraction and reflection, which close the intellectual catalogue.

In our vain attempts to overturn the order of nature, by presenting objects and pursuits to the mind, which demand the exertion of faculties of which it is not yet in possession, we are guilty

of a double species of imposition. We impose upon our pupils, by making them conceive that they get ideas of things, on which they have, in reality, no ideas; and we impose upon ourselves by their seeming progress—an imposition which is greatly aided by the facility with which the sound of words is committed to memory in early life. Thus, without paying any attention to the cultivation of the first and fundamental faculties, we flatter ourselves that we have abridged the path to wisdom and knowledge; while, in reality, we have been leading them from it, in the direct road to conceit and ignorance.

When we consider that the exercise of attention is absolutely necessary towards distinct perception and accurate discernment; and reflect how difficult it is to rouse attention in the slow, and to check the rapid succession of ideas in the quick, so as to give attention leave to operate; we shall perceive, that a multiplicity of things to be learned at once, must inevitably tend to retard the progress of the faculties. Those who have experienced how difficult it is to give just, and clear, and distinct notions to a child, upon any subject which is not the immediate object of its external senses, must be sensible of the utter impossibility of its learning many things well at the same time. Where the attention is turned from object to object, the consequence will be, that it will fix on none; not, at least, for such a length of time as to acquire clear and distinct conceptions. It is the perceptions only that will in this case be exercised; the words will be seen, they will be heard, and they will be repeated. These perceptions will be committed to memory; but in all this process there is neither knowledge, judgment, nor discernment;

and the more completely the time is filled by such employment, the more will the development of these faculties be retarded.

This leads to the queries with which my last letter concluded. Is it proper to restrict the exercise of memory in childhood to subjects whereon it has acquired just and accurate notions? Is it never to be exercised upon words, of whose meaning it has no distinct ideas? I should be sorry to be so understood. I think the memory may be exercised with great advantage in childhood, upon words which can at that period, convey no distinct ideas to the mind; but these are words which are afterwards to be made use of; they are the tools with which the mind is, at a future period, to work. Such are the rules of grammar; the terms made use of in the sciences, which are to form a part of the future studies; and, in short, all those general classifications, which tie, as it were, the objects of knowledge into separate parcels, and thus abridge the labour of research and arrangement.

Every one, who at an advanced period of life has attempted to instruct himself in any branch of science, must be sensible how much the difficulty is increased, by the loss of the aptitude; which memory has in early life, for retaining mere perceptions. What is clearly conceived upon the subject, the memory faithfully retains; but it is not without great and repeated efforts that the necessary *terms* come to be familiarly recollected. I have known several persons, who have been by this difficulty deterred from the pursuit of botany, chemistry, and other sciences for the acquirement of which they felt the most ardent inclination. Had the technical terms belonging to those sciences been committed to memory, at that period of life when

words (that is to say perceptions,) are received with facility, and recollected with ease, the sciences I have mentioned would have been attained without the smallest difficulty.

The grammatical rules of every language come exactly under the same description. Persons to whom these rules have been familiar from the period of infancy, easily acquire the habit of arranging their words with propriety: while those who have not at an early period made this acquirement, though by the study of philosophical grammar, they may attain a perfect knowledge of its principles, yet will they in practice be frequently at a loss, and often liable to error. I candidly confess, that I speak this from my own experience; and am sensible that a more perfect acquaintance with the rules of grammar, acquired even by rote in early life, would have saved me many a painful hour of future study.

Here, then, have I presented you with a wide field for the exercise of the memory of perceptions. But deceive not yourself; deceive not your child into an opinion that it has obtained any *knowledge* from these exercises. Let them be looked upon as they really are—mere materials, which are to be made use of at the proper period. Of real use they will certainly be found; they will be as well tempered mortar in the construction of the solid edifice. But you must not so far mistake, as to consider this mortar as the building; if you do, the intellectual fabric will never be reared.

It is, I believe, a very generally received notion, that a taste for poetry is inspired by the recitation of verses. Let us examine in what this taste consists.

Poetry addresses itself particularly to the imagination and to the feelings. "In poetry;" says Doctor Stewart, "the effect is inconsiderable, *unless upon a mind which possesses some degree of the author's genius; a mind amply furnished, by its previous habits, with the means of interpreting the language which he employs; and able, by its own imagination, to co-operate with the effects of the art.*" And is it by a senseless repetition of the poet's words, that all these indispensable requisites are to be acquired? I grant, that by the repetition of smooth verses, the ear may become sensible of harmonious measure; and this, I believe, often enough passes for poetical taste. But where the mind is incapable of keeping pace with the rapid associations of the poet; where the finest allusions are lost for want of conceptions to apprehend their meaning; where the finest imagery presents no object to the mind; the emotions that are excited have surely no affinity to the sublime or beautiful. Even in descriptive poetry, unless the objects have been familiar to the perceptions, it is impossible that the most just and beautiful description can convey any ideas to the mind.

Let us suppose a little girl, whose acquaintance with natural objects extends to the grass plat which ornaments the centre of some neighbouring square. In order to cultivate a taste for descriptive poetry, she is enjoined the task of getting by heart Gray's celebrated Elegy, which abounds in imagery at once natural and affecting. Let us follow her in the conceptions she forms from it. Two lines will be a sufficient example:

> "The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
> The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea."

The curfew, it is more than probable she has never heard of. Perhaps in some of the Beauties of History, which she has read as lessons, the curfew may have been mentioned; but *it is possible* that it may never have been explained; of the tolling of a bell she has perhaps heard, but of the meaning of *knell* she is completely ignorant. With the term *parting day* she, it is likely, associates the idea of the black Monday, on which she parted with her friends to return to school; an association sufficiently melancholy to accord with the tone of the poem, but not very likely to facilitate her knowledge of its design. What does she make, what *can* she make, of the succeeding line? A *herd* she has probably heard of, as one who takes care of sheep, goats, or other animals; but why the herd should *low*, is certainly beyond her comprehension. How, or in what manner, he *winds*, is equally so. She is told, indeed, that he winds slowly, and she knows that one may wind a clock or a watch either slowly or quickly; and with that idea she probably associates it, passing the succeeding words of *o'er the lea* as mere expletives, placed there by the poet to lengthen out the line; for which purpose *tweedle dee* would, to her conception, have done every whit as well.

I could thus go through the whole poem, and think I should leave no doubt upon your mind at the conclusion, that the child had received as many ideas from this exercise of memory, as she would have done from the repetition of any old rhyme.

Where the perceptive powers have been sufficiently exercised upon natural objects, so as to render the greater part of a poetical description intelligible, great advantage may indeed arise from the perusal; because in that case, the pleasure

which the mind receives from seeing the images with which it has been familiar, set in a new, and more elegant, and elevated point of view, will serve to enliven the powers of curiosity and observation, and prove a stimulus to the acquirement of new ideas.

I well remember how eagerly I caught the information, that bells were worn by the leaders of the flock, in most parts of England. The custom was unknown in the part of the country where I passed my childhood, and consequently the first lines of a poetical description which I ardently admired, were to me unintelligible.* The remaining lines presented objects with which I had long been familiar. The simple superstitions of the peasantry were known to me; I had frequently heard their origin explained, and their folly pointed out; but the colours thrown over them by the charm of poetry, presented them to my view in a new and interesting light.

And now, my dear friend, let me refer it to your judgment, (setting all adherence to custom, to theory, and to prejudice, entirely aside) whether a relish for the beauties of poetical description will not be much more likely to result from a lively at-

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* The following are the lines alluded to:

"When Blouselind expir'd, the wether's bell
Before the drooping flock pour'd forth her knell;
The solemn death-watch click'd the hour she dy'd,
And shrilling crickets in the chimney cry'd;
The boding raven on her cottage sat,
And with hoarse croaking, warn'd us of her fate;
The lambkin, which her wonted prudence bred,
Dropp'd on the plains that fatal instant dead;
Swarm'd on a rotten stick, the bees I spy'd,
Which erst I saw when Goody Dobson dy'd."

tention to all the images which are employed by the poet, as they become objects of perception, than by the repetition of words without ideas? A familiar and intimate acquaintance with the objects of nature will not, it is true, be always sufficient to inspire poetical taste; but without an intimate acquaintance with natural objects, the conceptions of the poet can never be understood; for it is from the material world that all the finest imagery of the poet is derived. From the same source we have all our ideas of the sublime and beautiful. The descriptions of the poet, by calling our attention to these objects, increases the emotions which they have a natural tendency to excite; and thus a taste for poetry enhances the pleasure we derive from contemplating the beauties of nature, while an accurate knowledge of natural objects gives to poetry a peculiar zest.

It is, then, from a cultivation of the perceptive faculties, that we only can attain those powers of conception which are essential to taste; and without this cultivation, all the beauties of all the poets who have ever written, committed to memory, would do no more towards inspiring poetical taste, than the smell of a rose would do towards giving an idea of its colour to one who had been born blind.

From the tenor of these observations on the cultivation of the perceptive and conceptive faculties, the advantages of a country education in the early part of life will appear sufficiently evident. Those who have it not in their power to give this advantage to their children; those whose situation precludes their pupils from the benefit of an extensive and familiar acquaintance with nat-

ural objects, ought to be particularly solicitous to make them amends for this misfortune, by seizing every opportunity of directing their attention to the natural objects within their reach. If the vegetable world is shut to their perusal, the book of animated nature is open before them. If "the various landscape burst *not* on the sight," the sun, moon and stars may still be seen. Nor ought an attentive examination of the works of art to be neglected. In most of these, some principles of science are involved. From the most simple piece of mechanism ideas may be derived; and no source that can furnish the mind with ideas which are just and accurate, ought we to overlook.

I have incurred the risk of wearying you upon the subject of accurate conception, because I believe that it is but little attended to by the instructers of youth; and I would rather tax your patience by prolixity, than leave any thing unsaid which could tend to enforce the belief of its importance. That importance will still appear in a stronger point of view, when we come to consider the faculty of judgment, which shall be the subject of the next letter.

Adieu.

LETTER VII.

JUDGMENT.

First begins to operate upon the objects of perception.—Necessity of exercising it upon sensible objects.—Illustrations.—How it may at first be exercised on moral propositions.—Party prejudice inimical to its cultivation.—Observations on this head.—The use of history.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

As all the errors, and many of the vices of mankind, originate in a deficiency or perversion of the faculty of judgment, we are called upon for a very particular attention to its cultivation and improvement. By tracing the progress of its gradual development in the human mind, we shall perhaps be enabled to exert our own judgment to advantage, in determining on the steps most proper to be taken for the cultivation of this important faculty; while by observing the obstacles frequently opposed to its improvement, we shall perceive the reason of its seldom attaining maturity.

It evidently appears that judgment begins first to operate on the perceptive faculties; and that till the commencement of this operation, the mind is incapable of improvement from the object of sense. The knowledge that is obtained of the relative distances of visible objects, is an operation of judgment: even in the belief of the existence of such objects, judgment is concerned. And this consideration ought to make us particularly careful of misleading the tender minds of infants into erroneous judgments, concerning the powers and

properties of the objects with which they are most conversant.

"If you touch that stick, it will be angry and beat you," says the foolish nurse. "The stick is taller than you are," says the more sensible mother, "and if you bring it upon you it will hurt you."

It is by means of judgment, that a child is gradually made sensible that the presence of objects does not depend upon his perception of them. To the infant the object is no longer present than it is visible to his eyes. The powers of conception and judgment must both have exerted their influence, before he believes the contrary: and by what slow degrees their influence is exerted is obvious; as we see children of two or three years of age, who, when they cover their eyes, imagine they are securely screened from observation.

If we attempt to force the progress of judgment at a very early age, we shall only weaken its powers; if we are always ready in every little instance to interpose our own, so as to forestall the judgments of the child, we shall teach it to rest upon authority, and the faculty of judgment will probably be little exerted through life.

It ought, therefore, to be our business to lead and to assist the judgment, so as to render it strong and vigorous, rather than to impose upon it the dictates of authority. By pointing out to children the erroneous judgments which they form upon the trifles within their sphere, we shall not only improve their powers of judging, but make them sensible of the advantage of implicit obedience to those who are capable of so much more discernment.

A child considers its painted toy as *a whole;* it has no notion of its parts, properties, or attributes.

It is told that by wetting it, it will be destroyed. Unmindful of your warnings, it drags it through water; the paint comes off, the glue dissolves, and the whole fabric is demolished.

"Did not I tell you, you little mischievous monkey, that it would be destroyed! The little coach knew that you were naughty in disobeying me, and it went to pieces."

Charming lesson to the judgment this! much is it likely to improve under such management!

"Come to me, my little fellow, and I will let you see my reason for warning you against wetting this toy. You see, in the first place, that it was made up of separate pieces of wood, which, being cut into the proper shape, were joined together by means of a little glue; now this glue or cement dissolves in water, so that you see the reason of its coming asunder as soon as it was wet. Let the pieces be dried, and you shall have a little cement to fix them together again yourself. You know that the wood was at first white, like the colour of the boards of the floor; but when the coach was made, the toyman put a little paint upon it, which being ill made up, and slightly laid on, was easily washed off. And now you see, my dear, how I came to foretell the consequences of putting your toy in water."

Not a day, scarcely an hour passes, in which a judicious and attentive mother may not find opportunities of improving the faculties of judgment and conception in her children. The great point to be attended to is the co-operation of these faculties in every point which she explains. If she goes beyond their reach, they will never be exerted. If she does not discriminate, she will, in her attempts at instructing the infant mind, be only giving a con-

fused and indistinct knowledge of facts, instead of cultivating those faculties by which alone real and useful knowledge can ever be acquired.

"Some are born to greatness, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them," says Falstaff; and so it is with learning. It is too often *thrust* upon children; and where it is so, we may venture to assert that greatness will never be achieved. A truly great and comprehensive mind was never yet formed by artificial means. In order to effect the complete and perfect development of the intellectual blossom, we must defend the bud from canker; we must expose it to the genial influence of the sun of reason; we must nourish it by truth, and promote its expansion by fertilizing the soil; but if we forcibly tear it open, we may bid adieu to all expectation of fruit.

Of all the faculties, that of judgment is most essentially injured by the injudicious speed of our career in modern education. The judgment indeed, has no time to operate, no opportunity for exertion. Every thing is presented *ready-made*, if I may use the expression, and the pupil has nothing to do but to clothe his memory with the garments provided for it; and where these are deficient, it must put up with the deficiency, for it has no materials wherewith to weave any for itself.

The propositions upon which it is the province of judgment to exercise its power, are all in their natures either true or false; and whether they be true or false, it is the business of judgment to ascertain. By having been frequently exercised upon those in which its conceptions were assisted by the senses, it comes by degrees to be prepared for deciding upon those which are formed from ideas in

the mind, the patterns of which are no longer present to the sight.

Thus a child whose conceptions have been exercised upon numbers, so as to have acquired clear and distinct ideas of what is meant by one, two, three, &c. will more easily perceive the truth of the proposition, that three times three are nine; than a younger child, whose conceptions have not been thus exercised, will perceive the truth of the proposition, that one and one make two. To enable it to form a judgment upon this, it must have clear and distinct conceptions of the meaning of the words; and added to that, the judgment must be assisted by the perceptions; for without visible or tangible objects, no knowledge of numbers, or judgments, upon them, could be acquired.

In learning the power of numbers, the judgment is much improved, provided that the judgment be permitted to be duly exercised. But if we only aim at hurrying the pupil on as fast as possible, through the rules of arithmetic, that we may be able to boast of its astonishing progress in having got to the *Rule of Three*, while others of the same age have not proceeded beyond simple Addition; the memory will probably have been the only faculty exercised throughout the whole process. Throughout the whole course of education, children are great sufferers from our having forgotten the process by which we ourselves acquire the knowledge we now possess. The intermediate ideas which served as links in the chain of our original conceptions, have fled from our recollection; we therefore, never think of presenting them to the minds of our children: and yet without these connecting ideas, it is impossible that we should ever succeed in communicating instruction.

For the slow, the steps of the ladder should be shortened : and we ought to ascertain their having firm footing upon one, before we urge their progress to another. For the quick, fewer steps will serve : but these ought to be examined with accuracy, so as that they may be retraced with certainty and precision ; otherwise the pupil will be in danger of hurrying with precipitancy to the top, and then flying off to some other object; and will in vain endeavour to find again the way over the same ground.

Every judgment which the mind forms, is a distinct step in the path of knowledge ; and the absurd attempts which are made to lift children at once into the regions of science, are no less ridiculous, than would be our endeavours to make children walk with ease and gracefulness, by always carrying them in our arms. The use of the mental faculties, as well as of the limbs, must be acquired by exercise. Such is the law of nature ; and we never gain by opposing her authority.

I have known children, who, from the time they could speak, had masters upon masters to instruct them ; and what was the consequence ? Mere prate ; many words and few ideas. Let us suppose one of these children learning arithmetic ; which, as I have before observed, may be made an useful means of strengthening the faculty of judgment. It is taught to repeat after the master, " five and two make seven ; seven and seven are fourteen," and so on ; till by frequent repetition, the relative power of numbers is fixed in the memory ; and thus it is able to get through addition tolerably well. Next comes the multiplication table, which it learns by rote, and applies in the same way, as often as it is wanted. And so on through

all the rules, the master assisting all the time whenever the pupil is at any loss, but never attempting to unfold a principle, or to give a single idea upon the subject. I speak from experience, as it is the way in which I myself was taught, and as I believe many others are.

Let us now suppose a child, whose conceptions have been gradually improved by the unceasing, though almost imperceptible, efforts of a judicious and attentive parent. She marks the time when ideas upon the subject of numbers may be given with effect. She seizes the most proper period for beginning her instructions, or rather for leading the mind to instruct itself. By frequently recurring opportunities she exercises the conceptions and the judgment upon units. She renders all the different combinations that can produce numbers under ten, familiar to these faculties; and then proceeds to add ten to ten, till the conceptions can embrace hundreds. Tables of numbers are then given to be summed up, and at every step the judgment is taught to decide on its truth and certainty. Multiplication is explained as a shorter method of addition, and its principles unfolded in plain and easy terms. By frequent exercise, the mind becomes so familiar to the subject, that its knowledge appears intuitive; its ideas are all clear and accurate; and although the rules may not be gone through with a tenth part of the speed, with which they were galloped in the former instance; we cannot doubt that when both pupils come to put their knowledge into practice, the latter will have a great and manifest advantage.

How, indeed, in the former case, could the poor child possibly acquire clear ideas upon any sub-

ject, when it probably had twenty things to learn at the same time all opposite in their natures, calling up different trains of ideas, and requiring different tones of mind? It is likewise probable, that in the high encomiums it has heard bestowed on those ornamental accomplishments which are deemed so necessary to a person of rank, it has learned to associate ideas of vulgarity, and consequently of contempt, to a science which is peculiarly necessary to people of business. By these false associations the judgment is perverted at a very early period: and of these false associations the parent must divest herself, who would have her child possessed of a sound mind and vigorous understanding.

The conduct of life requires no less accuracy of calculation than the conduct of business; and the science of numbers, from first to last, being that which furnishes us with the most distinct ideas,* is of the utmost importance, not merely to the merchant and accomptant, but to every rational being. It ought besides to be considered, that the mind makes use of number in all its ideas of duration and extension. Our ideas of infinity, with regard either to time or space, are nothing but the infinity of number. Those whose ideas concerning the powers of number are faint and confused,

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* *The simple modes of number, are of all others, the most distinct;* even the least variation, which is an unit, making each combination as clearly different from that which approacheth nearest to it, as the most remote: *two* being as distinct from *one* as two hundred: and the ideas of *two* being as distinct from the ideas of *three,* as the magnitude of the whole earth is from that of a mite. This is not the case in other simple modes, in which it is not so easy, nor perhaps possible for us to distinguish betwixt two approaching ideas; for who will undertake to find a difference (in his conceptions) between the white of this paper and that of the next degree to it? or can form distinct ideas of every, the least excess in extension.—*See Locke on the Human Understanding.*

will be found to have very confused and inaccurate ideas upon many other subjects.

In the education of boys this is, perhaps sufficiently attended to; but why our own sex should be so utterly precluded, as they generally are, from this most useful branch of knowledge, can only be accounted for from the prevalence of that false association, which renders every thing that wears the appearance of real usefulness disgraceful to us. Hence it comes, that whatever has a tendency to strengthen the judgment is either totally omitted, or so superficially run over, in female education, that it appears as if judgment were a faculty which females never, in any situation of life, could have occasion for. A little reflection upon this subject would surely convince us of the contrary. A little reflection would teach us, that in every situation in which a female can be placed; whether she be free or subordinate; whether she moves in an exalted sphere, or be reduced to the duties of an inferior one; in public and in private; abroad or at home; judgment is ever necessary, ever essential;—and that whatever be her rank and situation in society, if judgment do not form her opinions, and direct her conduct, she will become an object of contempt.

Beautiful imbecility will be admired, it is true; but let us apply to numerical rules, and calculate the period of this admiration. What proportion does it bear to the length of human life? What is the sum total of the advantages to be derived from it, when compared with those which would be experienced in the capability of fulfilling, with honour and propriety, the duties of a wife, a mother, the mistress of a family, the prudent adviser, and the faithful friend? Is it acting with wisdom

and consistency, in the first place, to do all in our power to deprive beings of the use of this faculty, and then to plunge them into situations where its exertion is absolutely necessary? This is the argument, (and an unanswerable one it is) which can alone be used with propriety by the advocates of the frail fair ones, when pleading in extenuation of their foul offences in our courts of justice. Were this argument to be adorned, as it might, by the eloquence of an Erskine or a Garrow, it would do more towards opening the eyes of the public to the consequences of an education merely ornamental, than all that can be written upon the subject by the divine or moralist.

Let it be represented to the juries, who are called, (alas, so often!) to pronounce upon the heinous conduct of shameless matrons, that the creatures, whose crimes are thus exposed to public scorn, can scarcely be deemed accountable agents; since, in our ideas of accountableness, rationality is always included. Now ample proof can be brought, that from the cradle upwards, every possible pains have been taken to destroy the rational faculty. Without judgment, there can be no knowledge of first principles; without first principles, there can be no rule of conduct or of duty. How, then, can creatures be said to transgress against principles which they never had it in their power to comprehend? They were taught, that the sole duty of woman was *to be amiable*. That in order to be amiable, they must be accomplished and genteel; that is to say, they must learn to dance, and dress, and "nickname God's creatures;" to talk sentiment, to affect sensibility, and to follow fashion into whatever follies she may lead. Have they not done all this? And now mark the inconsist-

ency of man! They are accused of sinning against the laws of God and of their country; when they can call God, their country, and their parents, to witness, that their judgment was never sufficiently cultivated to pronounce upon the truth and propriety of a single precept, moral or divine! They were taught to look on personal admiration as the chief good; when they found it was no longer to be expected from the husband, were they to blame for seeking it in the admirer? Of all that they were taught to believe amiable, they are still possessed; for no one estimable quality of the heart or understanding was in the catalogue! Sensibility and sentiment comprised their only notions of virtue; and by giving way to sensibility and sentiment they became adulteresses; or to speak in the more delicate terms of modern refinement, *amiable unfortunates*.

To the effects of a pernicious education, and not to the frailty of the sex, ought the natural consequences of a want of principle to be assigned. Such a change in the mode of education as would expand the powers of intellect, enable the mind to embrace truth, to perceive the utility and advantage of moral rectitude, and to regulate the passions and affections of the heart by the laws of piety and wisdom, would do more towards putting a stop to the career of vice, in every rank and station in society, than all the laws and punishments the legislature can devise. Pardon, my friend, pardon, I beseech you, a digression into which I have been unwarily hurried; and leaving the *amiable* and *accomplished* frail ones to reap the fruit of the erroneous ideas they have imbibed, let us turn to the consideration of the judging faculty,

by the due cultivation of which these fatal errors in conduct may happily be avoided.

Having first exercised the judgment by means of the perceptive faculties, it gradually becomes ripe for perceiving the truth of propositions, the subjects of which are not immediate objects of sense. The proposition, for instance, *that the same cause will always produce the same effect*, though the foundation of our reasoning in many sciences, as well as in morals, is first made clear to the understanding by means of the senses. To render the conceptions upon this, and similar propositions, clear, distinct, and accurate, is, I believe, of much more importance than is generally imagined. In the words in which I have delivered the proposition, a child would not apprehend its meaning: But show him, that while he strikes his ball against the wall with force, it will always rebound with proportional activity; and that when he throws it gently, the re-action will be proportionably weaker; he will soon understand your meaning. You may make him sensible, by a thousand familiar examples, that the same law extends throughout all matter, and that wherever there appears any variation in the effect, from causes apparently similar, we may be assured that the similarity is only apparent, but that, in reality, the cause is different. Such instructions tend to awaken and keep alive attention, while they preserve the mind from vulgar prejudices and superstitions; which all originate in confined views, and want of accurate observation. The effect they have in strengthening the judgment, is evident from the conduct of those whose judging faculties have never been thus cultivated. Propositions, which appear intuitive to others, seem absurd to those whose conceptions

are habitually dull and languid for want of cultivation; while the judgment, that has never been exercised on the objects of perception, takes every thing for granted without examination. Hence that credulity, with regard to the marvellous, which is a disgrace to the enlightened age in which we live.

When a child has had the connexion betwixt cause and effect sufficiently impressed upon the mind by means of exterior objects, it will more easily comprehend the application of the same principle to morals.

That a want of veracity produces loss of confidence as its inevitable consequence, is a truth of which the judgment may be made sensible at an early period; and indeed, while this faculty is uncorrupted by selfishness, it will seldom fail to decide with precision on every point of justice. Easily may the judgment be led to perceive that good nature and affectionate dispositions produce, as their effect, complacency and affection in the breasts of others; that esteem is the natural consequence of integrity, wisdom and benevolence; and that all the malevolent and dissocial passions beget displeasure and hatred. But in order to fix these associations in the mind, it is absolutely necessary that the conduct of the parent should give invariable testimony to their truth. If the same conduct in the child be at one time found fault with, and at another gets leave to pass unnoticed; if praise or blame are bestowed not according to desert, but according to present humour, these principles will never gain a firm establishment in the heart. Following your example, your child will learn to like and dislike from motives of caprice; and false expectations of gaining love and favour, without being at

any pains to merit esteem, will lay the foundation of many bitter disappointments.

You will, perhaps, object, that happiness and the world's esteem, are not always the inevitable result of virtuous conduct; and that by teaching children to expect them as certain effects, we should lead them into error, and expose them to mortification.

To this I answer, that though envy and malignity are apt to detract from merit, this very detraction shows a consciousness that esteem and approbation are the natural consequences of virtuous conduct; and that it is in hopes of obstructing this natural effect, that malevolence exerts its influence. Should it unfortunately succeed, it can only succeed with regard to our fellow-mortals. A powerful argument for endeavouring to approve ourselves to a higher power! A convincing proof of the inefficacy of all moral systems, that rest not on a more solid foundation than the applause of those who are frail and liable to error.

Seldom, however, even from our fellow-men, is the pure and upright conduct of the humble and the worthy, denied the meed of approbation and esteem. It is when we solicit the praise of the many, and not when we wish for the esteem of the good, that we are liable to disappointment. This observation receives ample support from the records of history and the annals of private life. Never, in all our researches, shall we find an instance, where unostentatious benevolence, justice, wisdom, and piety, were refused the esteem and approbation of mankind, unless where *party hatred*, by its deadly poison, blinded the eyes, and envenomed the heart. By this was the furious multitude influenced against the Saviour of the world! By this have many who *call themselves* his disciples,

been inflamed to cruelty and vengeance against their more deserving brethern.

The analyzation of party spirit can never take place in the moment of fermentation; but when that has sufficiently subsided to permit us to examine it minutely, it will appear compounded of fear, hatred, pride, envy, malice, and cruelty. As it operates most violently upon ignorance, there can be no better preservative from its attacks, than a strong and cultivated judgment, together with conceptions so clear, acute, and accurate, as to embrace the whole of the arguments, and to perceive the whole of the errors, on both sides of every question that is agitated.

Nothing can be more inimical to the cultivation of judgment, than an early initiation into party prejudices. By these the conceptions are misled, and the judgments concerning right and wrong must consequently be often erroneous. It is, at any time of life, fatal to the integrity of the moral character, to approve or disapprove according to the dictates of affection. The habit of doing so is to the young particularly injurious: it not only warps the judgment, but depraves the heart.

Did the cultivation of judgment once become an object of female education, the zeal of fair politicians might, perhaps, suffer some abatement; an evil that would not probably be productive of any very fatal consequences to society. Unbiassed judgment will perceive, that wisdom dwells with moderation, and that firmness of conduct is seldom united with outrageous violence of sentiment. Cultivated judgment will not produce indifference to the interest and happiness of the community at large, nor will it lead the mind to be contented with profound ignorance concerning the nature and origin

of points which are the objects of political dispute; but it will restrain wrath, and keep the individual in the path of duty. Happily for our sex, this leads not to the theatre of public strife. Were the judgment to be exercised in finding out this path in the eventful period of political disunion, blessed would be the consequences that must inevitably ensue! To heal the wounds of contention; to cool the raging fury of party animosity; to soften the rugged spirit of resentment; to allay the fervour of ambition; and to check the cruelty of revenge; would, to enlightened judgment, appear as the peculiar duty of those, who, not being called on to take an active part, are by this neutral situation, marked out as the mediators and peacemakers of society!

Let us ourselves acquire, and let us endeavour to give our children, such clear conceptions upon the subject, as may leave them at no loss to pronounce on the consequences of a conduct marked by benevolence, wisdom, and moderation; in opposition to the effects produced by violent prejudice, blind zeal, and cruel intolerance.

History presents us with an instructive portrait of the human passions; but it is of the passions principally as they are actuated by ambition. Without previous care to strengthen the judgment, history, therefore, by the interest which it excites in the fate of heroes and conquerors, may be instrumental in awakening ambition, and kindling the flame of false glory in an ardent mind. The historian who does not catch a portion of his hero's spirit, and enter with warmth into his interests, will be cold and inanimate. He who does, will be apt to throw false colours over actions that are in their natures base and vile; to extenuate what is reprehensible; and sometimes to extol what is undeserving of sober approbation. Thus are the moral notions of youth

in danger of being corrupted, from the very sources which we have assigned for their nourishment and improvement. This, I believe, to be often the case with boys: and is the inevitable consequence of permitting the imagination to get the start of judgment. Were the judgment to be exercised in tracing *cause* and *effect*, as they are delineated in the historic page; the ardent youth, instead of being dazzled by the false lustre of splendid achievements, would pursue their consequences to the human race, and see wide spread ruin, pain, misery, and devastation, the awful price of short-lived glory.

The various advantages accruing from the study of history are too numerous and too important to admit of being fully described in such an imperfect sketch: suffice it to say, that under the direction of a judicious preceptor, it cannot fail to enlarge the conceptions, to increase the number of ideas, to improve the judgment, and to strengthen moral and religious principle in the heart. The mere knowledge of dates and epochs, of the names of sovereigns, and the length of their successive reigns, and even of the principal features that marked the character of every prince, and of the most remarkable events that took place in every age, will go a very little way towards intellectual improvement. This is the knowledge and the sole knowledge that can be obtained from abridgments. From these, therefore, none of the moral uses of history can possibly be derived. The associations they give are merely those of time and place, which, as we have already seen, are the only associations familiar to the vulgar. Abridgments of history are merely to be considered as exercises of the memory; and whoever expects by their means the improvement of any other faculty, will be miserably disappointed.

Are, then, abridgments of no use? To the young, I certainly think they are of none, and worse than of none; for I deem it much safer for the mind to be destitute of all ideas upon any subject, than to have those which are confused and indistinct. But to such as have in youth laid in an ample fund of information, when that information, begins to fade on the memory, abridgments may be found of great service. They give the outlines which the mind is in possession of materials to fill up. Every event which they record, awakens a chain of associations, and revives ideas which had become in a manner extinct. To the learned, therefore, ought the use of abridgments to be confined; while to the minds that are on their progress to improvement, full, clear, distinct, and accurate ideas ought to be given upon every subject proposed to their consideration.

Here again we may observe the consequence of that impatience and precipitancy which in so many instances defeats the great purposes of education. By our impatience to make our children perfect in knowledge, we in reality present an insuperable bar to its acquirement. We cramp the powers of the soul, and lessen its capabilities. We teach it to skim the surface of science, and indolently to acquiesce in superficial attainments. Thus we produce a race of praters who know nothing; of talkers who never think; of light, trifling, and fantastic beings, alike destitute of intellectual vigour and of solid principle. You, my Friend, who live in blest retirement, see little of this. Let those who are conversant with what is called *the world*, pronounce upon its truth! Adieu.

LETTER VIII.

JUDGMENT.

Observations upon the method to be pursued in reading History.—Premature cultivation of imagination hurtful to judgment.—Other obstacles to its improvement examined.—Mode of female education formerly adopted, more favourable to judgment than the modern.—Examples.

Your observations, my dearest friend, convince me, that I have not sufficiently explained myself, with regard to the use of history in early education. My objection to abridgments does not, as you suppose, extend to those little nursery catalogues of kings and queens, whether in verse or prose. I think, on the contrary, that such chronological epitomes, committed to memory at that period when words are most easily retained in it, may be of great advantage. This can never be mistaken for a knowledge of history; which, I fear, a superficial acquaintance with the contents of larger abridgments very frequently is. You say that "it is impossible for children to read voluminous histories at a very early age;" and I entirely agree in your opinion.

I spoke of history, as affording striking examples of the truth of the proposition concerning cause and effect, upon which I supposed the judgment to have been for some time exercised. From the whole scope and tenor of my argument, it will appear sufficiently obvious, that I adopt, as a fundamental principle, the impossibility of any exercise of judg-

ment, where there are not clear and distinct conceptions. But there may be very clear and distinct conceptions of the causes and consequences of particular events, and the mind may be capable of forming very just and accurate ideas concerning particular instances of human conduct, long before it is capable of embracing a series of complicated and successive events. Long before it has strength to wield the massy chain, it may be capable of examining an individual link.

Hence it appears to me, that the judgment will be exercised to more advantage, by a minute investigation of a detached period of history, judiciously chosen, than by the perusal of the abridged history of ages. Fully apprised of the narrow limits of its information, the mind will be in no danger of that shallow conceit which constantly attends the superficial. It will be prompted to acquire further knowledge for itself; and, by having been put upon the method of exercising judgment upon every subject it investigates, its inquiries will never fail to be attended with advantage.

Against the morality of the tales of intruction now in general use, I make no objection; because, whether these fictitious representations of events be moral or otherwise, they are alike inimical to our design of cultivating the faculties according to the order in which they are developed by the hand of nature.

I hope I have made it plainly appear, that judgment is coeval with the faculty of conception; and that both faculties must be cultivated by means of the external senses. But fancy or imagination has a distinct and peculiar province; and I shall endeavour to show, that if judgment has not been sufficiently strengthened before the powers of fancy

are called into exercise, there is little reason to hope that the faculty of judgment will ever afterwards attain perfection. Now, by far the greater number of entertaining stories which I have ever read, are addressed solely to the imagination. They may produce sensations favourable to the cultivation of the affections; but the judgment, so far from receiving any improvement, from their perusal, must be lulled asleep, before the fancy is sufficiently awakened to follow the story. When, indeed, the judgment has been previously exercised upon first principles, so as to have clear and distinct notions of cause and effect, it will be competent to decide on the probability or improbability of supposed events; and from the impulse of the moral sense, the mind will take pleasure in contemplating the laws of poetical justice. But where the vain attempt is made to impress first principles upon the mind by means of fictions addressed to the imagination, the judgment will take no part in the decision. By a succession of these interesting tales, the minds of the quick and ardent will be filled with wild and incoherent images, false associations, romantic ideas—and imprudent conduct will be the certain result. Nor will the consequence be less fatal to the slow and indolent: conscious of the languid flow of their ideas, they have much gratification in whatever, without exertion on their parts, accelerates their course. To children of this description, therefore, books of amusement are thought particularly useful. But would we give ourselves the trouble to examine a little farther than the surface, we would be convinced, that the great object with respect to such minds is to rouse them to an active exertion of their faculties; whereas, by merely following the tale of fancy, they indulge the inclination to indolence.

While I thus express my disapprobation of those fictions which stimulate the imagination, while they retard the operation of judgment; it may be necessary to say something of those which are addressed to the judgment, and manifestly aim at its improvement. Fictions of this nature are nothing more than examples tending to elucidate propositions submitted to the judgment, by placing them in a conspicuous point of view. They ought, of necessity, to be simple, clear, and perspicuous. Such were the parables by which our blessed Lord vouchsafed to instruct his unenlightened auditors; every one of which will, upon examination, be found to be exclusively addressed to the judgment. Let the learned reader compare with these the wild fictions of the Koran, which are all addressed to the imagination; and while he sees in the former the manifestations of divine wisdom, let him be careful not to follow the method of instruction of which the latter is a model.

To educate youth by means of pretty stories, though a system which has been but lately introduced into this country, has been for ages practised by all the oriental nations. Let us look to its effects on the inhabitants of Asia. What vigour of intellect, what strength of genius, has it there produced? Let us behold its operation in the imbecility and indolence that marks the Eastern character: and with such glaring proofs of its fatal consequences before our eyes, let us beware of enfeebling the minds of the rising generation by a similar procedure.

The swarm of heterogeneous absurdities that daily issue from the press under the appellation of novels, would (if any had sufficient command of patience for investigating their contents) afford the most convincing proof of the effects produced up-

on the mind by calling forth the imagination, while the powers of judgment are suffered to lie dormant. In these writers, we behold the powers of fancy employed in making the most absurd combinations from the few confused and inaccurate ideas they happen to possess. We see invention on the stretch to produce effects to which the causes assigned are totally inadequate ; the laws of nature violated ; the course of the passions misrepresented ; the principles of morality set at defiance ; and the whole mixed up with a jargon of sentiment, which is incomprehensible to plain common sense. Yet so voracious is the appetite for novelty in those who have never been taught the exercise of judgment, that such books are read, aye, *and none but such*, by numbers of young women, who hope in due time to become the mothers of hopeful families !

The train of ideas introduced into the mind by the hyperbolical language of fiction, is found so agreeable to the young, so favourable to the indulgence of that luxurious indolence, to which most have some propensity ; that it is no wonder that minds, to which such trains of ideas have become habitual, should find it difficult, if not impossible, to turn the current of thought into other channels. Now nothing can be more evident, than that every process of reasoning, whether on the nature of material objects, or upon subjects of speculation, requires a train of thought, a series of distinct and clear ideas ; and I leave it for you to decide, whether it is by accustoming the mind to the train of thought produced by fiction, that it can be best prepared for this exercise of the intellectual powers. Is there not rather some reason to apprehend, that minds, which, instead of having had the perceptions

exercised on sensible objects, and the powers of conception and judgment gradually unfolded by the same means, have been taught all they know through the medium of the imagination, will never through life exercise any other faculty? All the ideas of right and wrong, just and unjust, probable and improbable, will be tinged with the false colouring imperceptibly received from the train of incongruous and fictitious images perpetually passing through the mind. But where the reasoning powers have been habitually exercised on adequate objects, the train of ideas, which occupy the fancy, will no longer be of the nature of unprofitable or pernicious visions; they will be the parents of genius, of invention, of exalted purposes, of good resolutions, and of meritorious conduct.

The cultivation of judgment, so far from presenting any obstacle to the enjoyment of the pleasures of imagination, is absolutely necessary towards their being enjoyed in any superior degree. Who would compare the pleasure enjoyed by a cultivated mind in perusing the exquisite compositions of a Homer, a Shakspeare, or a Milton, to that which a novel-reading Miss receives from the eventful tale that beguiles her of her midnight slumber? Nay, laying these higher works of genius out of the question, let us suppose two young people employed in reading one of Miss Burney's admirable pictures of life, (which, for want of an appropriate term, likewise go under the denomination of Novels) and that one of these young persons has had her mind furnished with ideas, her conceptions vigorous and acute, her judgment strengthened by exercise, and her affections governed by the well-examined principles of moral rectitude;—while the other, instructed by means of fiction, has

had her sensibilities exercised while judgment was suffered to lie dormant, her conceptions weak, her ideas few and confused, and her moral principles mere feelings directed by prejudice. The love of novelty is equally strong in both ; both pursue the thread of the story with equal ardour. But in the course of the perusal, how many sources of pleasure are open to the one, which, to the other, are totally unknown. With admiration the one contemplates the genius displayed in the conduct of the fable ; she marks each trait of character, enters into the train of associations by which it is produced, observes how naturally they spring from the situation of the person described ; and perceives how justly the author has pourtrayed the inevitable consequences of the conduct to which they lead. Every sentiment, every moral reflection, attracts her notice, and calls forth the powers of judgment. Her vigorous conceptions embrace every idea of the author, and her cultivated mind feels all the exquisite emotions of taste. A thousand images which have called forth these emotions in her soul, have passed unnoticed by her companion. To the fate of the lovers her interest is solely confined, and every thing that protracts the knowledge of their destiny, to her appears tedious and impertinent. She receives not from the work one idea in addition to her slender stock ; and when once her curiosity has been gratified by the denouement, her mind is completely vacated, or only filled with some fleeting images of visionary bliss.

Where trains of thought romantic and unprofitable occupy the imagination, they frequently acquire such power over the attention as to render its exertion upon present objects quite impossible. Absence of mind is not a failing peculiar to those who

are deeply engaged in abstract studies and pursuits; it is common to all; who have not had the faculty of attention early and properly cultivated. Where it has thus been cultivated, every common occurrence of life, every topic of conversation, every new object which presents itself to the eye, every sound which strikes the ear, is distinctly discriminated, and becomes the source of new ideas; but wherever, by the early exercise of imagination, the mind has acquired the habit of indulging in visionary reveries, it neither sees, hears, understands, marks, nor inwardly digests, what passes around it. Of this absence of mind we must have observed innumerable instances; and may, at little expense of reflection, be made fully sensible, that it must present a fatal obstacle to all intellectual improvement. Where the conceptions and the judgment have been early exercised on the objects of perception, I believe this absence of mind will rarely be met with. Where they have not been thus exercised, I believe it to be inevitable.

Supposing that the faculty of judgment has been exercised in your pupil so as to have attained to some degree of strength, it will still be subject to perversion from many causes internal and external, which it is the particular business of the preceptor to guard against. Of these corruptors of the judgment, it will be sufficient for our present purpose to mention those which are most likely to assault it in the early stage of which we now treat; recommending it to the reader who wishes for fuller information upon this important subject, to consult Dr. Isaac Watts, who, in his Essay on Logic, or the Right use of Reason, has given a very satisfactory view of the several causes by which the judgment is liable to be perverted.

I have all along insisted upon the necessity of cultivating the faculties of conception and judgment, by means of a strict attention to sensible objects. But if care be not taken to point out the fallacy of the senses, or, to speak more properly, to show the extent of their power, our pupils may be led into many errors by putting too much confidence in their perceptions.

By trusting to the evidence of sense, mankind, in the infancy of science, judged the world to be an extensive plain; the sun a small luminous body which rose from behind a high mountain, or from the bosom of the ocean, and performed its daily journey through the heavens; and the moon and the stars to be of the same insignificant magnitude as they appear to the naked eye. And though more enlightened notions concerning the heavenly bodies are now made familiar to children, even in the nursery, than was formerly known to sages; still, by trusting to the evidence of their senses, children are liable to errors of judgment, which, if not attended to, may lay the foundation of future prejudices. These, a truly liberal education will doubtless destroy. But if once these prejudices have taken root in the mind, it is not by going through the common routine of *accomplishments* that they will ever be extirpated.

The credulity natural to youth is another fruitful source of erroneous judgment. It will act with particular force upon minds that have never been accustomed to the actual examination of sensible objects. It is only the imbecility of ignorance, or the vanity of scepticism, that supposes any thing to exist without a cause. A sensible child will soon be convinced that it is impossible; and the mind cannot be better exercised in early life, than in discovering

the causes of appearances with which it is familiar, but for which it knows not how to account. A boy observes that his top spins as long as it is kept in motion ; tell him, when he asks you why it does so " that it is the nature of all tops," or that " it spins because it is whipped," and you lay the foundation for indifference or credulity. But if, instead of giving these foolish answers, you explain the real cause, and teach him to look out for similar examples of the operation of the laws of gravitation, you will probably be doing the faculty of judgment a greater service than it could have received from the longest and most laborious task.

It may be objected to this, that many mothers have not the degree of information requisite to enable them to communicate such sort of knowledge to their children. And is it because they are mothers that it is too late to obtain it ? What motive to the acquirement of knowledge half so powerful, as that which operates upon a mother's heart ? This motive, strong as it ought to be in all cases, will become still more weighty, when we consider that another very ample source of erroneous judgment is found to proceed from that arrogant confidence which frequently attends the consciousness of quickness of parts. All mothers wish their children to be distinguished by a quick capacity ; but dearly do they sometimes pay for the accomplishment of this wish ! Soon does the child perceive the mother's incapability of affording it information. She seeks to engage its affections by indulgence—by indulgence it learns to despise her authority. She is solicitous for the improvement of the genius in which she glories ; every step which the child advances in the path of knowledge, is a degradation to the mother in its esteem. Her admonitions are

without weight, her injunctions without authority. If it be a son whom she thus sees exalted to a superior, she may, perhaps, be proud to acknowledge the superiority, and though she feels herself neglected and despised, rejoice in the world's acknowledging her son for a man of genius; but if it be a daughter, whom she has thus taught to look down upon her, deep and many will be the wounds of her heart!

A mother, to be truly respectable in the eyes of her children, must not only be to them as a tender protector, a perpetual solace, and the source of every joy—but as a guide and oracle; one to whom they are to apply in every perplexity, from whom they are at all times certain of receiving light. The mother, who is capable of fulfilling the former part of the parental character only, will soon find that not all the tenderness and affection she can show, will procure for her that filial respect and veneration which is the precious reward of maternal sufferings and anxieties. To be truly respectable in the eyes of her offspring, a mother must be capable of instructing them. But is it by the common mode of boarding-school education that she is to attain this capability? Alas! no. Her perceptions have been there exercised, it is true; and the memory of perception likewise. But what has been done for the essential faculties of conception and judgment? How, without the cultivation of these, is she to be capable of communicating instruction to others? Impossible. But is it too late for her to set about the cultivation of these faculties in herself? The belief that it is so, is a fatal delusion. Do we not see frequent instances of men who have passed their youth in idleness, but who, at a period of life when many women are mothers of families,

begin to make up for lost time by serious application to those studies which they had formerly neglected? Do we not see such men succeed in their attempts? Do we not sometimes see those who were at twenty idle, ignorant, and uninformed, become, in a few years after, men of science and information? Why, then, should a woman of twenty, or of any age, think that because she is married, all improvement is impossible? Impossible I grant it is, if she intends to lead a life of modern dissipation. If her mornings are to be spent in the street, and her evenings at the card table, improvement is out of the question. But it is not to such mothers that I address myself. There are those of a different description; amiable, well-intentioned, domestic characters, who have an earnest wish to fulfil every duty, but who, from a fatal prejudice, do not consider an accession of knowledge as any of the duties belonging to the matron state. Let such seriously reflect in what light they would wish to be viewed by their children, and as they would desire to be respected, let them pursue the course that can alone render them respectable.

Happy the woman, who, in her endeavours to improve and cultivate her understanding, finds an auxiliary in her husband! Happy she, who is thus encouraged to the delightful and important task! Her success is infallible, her reward is certain.

But if her husband be *one of the multitude;* if fate has bound her to a man who despises female intellect; whose idea of matrimonial felicity includes not the companion and the friend; who merely wishes in his wife to find the qualities of the housekeeper, and the virtues of the spaniel; even then the wife is without excuse, who does not endeavour to qualify herself for fulfilling the duties of the

mother. Let her consider, that in the respect and esteem of her children she will find a solace for the want of that purest species of happiness which flows from congenial sentiment, mutual confidence and mutual esteem. Her husband may not be willing to allow her superiority of wisdom, (and if she be truly wise, she will never contend for it) but her children will rise and call her blessed!

Let us now return to the consideration of that arrogant confidence in self-opinion, which is so frequently the result of a child's finding itself in some instances wiser than its mother. This generally produces a degree of dogmatism very unfavourable to the improvement of judgment. "By what means soever," says the respectable Watts, "the dogmatist comes by his opinions, whether by his senses or his fancy, his education or his own reading, yet he believes them all with the same assurance that he does a mathematical truth; he has scarce any *probabilities* that belong to him; every thing with him is *certain* and infallible. Persons of this temper are seldom to be convinced of any mistake; a full assurance of their own notions makes all the difficulties on their own side vanish so entirely, that they think every point of their belief is written as with sun-beams, and wonder any one should find a difficulty in it."

The more the judgment is exercised in early life, the less liable will it be to this proud confidence in its own authority, which is never connected with true wisdom, though it is a frequent attendant upon quick parts, superficially cultivated; as is likewise its opposite—Scepticism.

"The dogmatist is sure of every thing—the sceptic believes nothing. Perhaps he has found him-

self often mistaken in matters of which he thought himself well assured in his younger days, and therefore he is afraid to give assent to any thing again."

"Both these prejudices," continues our author, "though they are so opposite to each other, yet they arise from the same spring, and that is, *impatience of study, and want of diligent attention in the search of truth.* The dogmatist is in haste to believe something; he cannot keep himself long enough in suspence, till some bright and convincing evidence appears on one side; but throws himself casually into the sentiments of one party or another, and then he will hear no argument to the contrary. The sceptic will not take pains to search things to the bottom; but when he sees difficulties on both sides, resolves to believe neither of them."

It sometimes happens, that these dispositions are united. Who more dogmatical and peremptory than the sceptic in his system of unbelief?

Doctor Watts assures us, that "the only cure for both these follies is *humility of soul, patience in study, diligence in inquiry, with an honest zeal for truth.*"

What he mentions as a cure, I would recommend to parents to teach their children as a prevention. All the disorders of the mind are much more easily prevented than remedied. Where pride and self-will have been permitted to take deep root, it will be a difficult task to inculcate true humility. Where the faculty of attention has never been sufficiently exercised, we cannot expect either patience in study, or diligence in inquiry. And where the mind has not been accustomed to find pleasure in the discovery of truth, we need not expect that it will ever exert much zeal in its pursuit.

Another source of error, concerning which it behoves us to be upon our guard, is that disposition to rest upon authority, which, if we do not take care to prevent it, may spring from that confidence in our superior wisdom and knowledge, which it is essential that the pupil should possess.

It requires, I confess, great delicacy of conduct to impress the pupil with perfect confidence in our judgment, and at the same time to lead him to exert his own, as if he had no such authority to rely upon. The only method by which it appears to me that this can possibly be effected, is early to lead the mind to those investigations, of which we certainly know the result. The child will then perceive the steps by which we were led to the knowledge we possess. He will perceive that our advantage over him is the effect of diligent inquiry and actual research, not of intuition. We may then, without any apprehension of being lessened in his opinion, candidly confess our ignorance upon subjects which have lain out of our line of pursuit, and use our very ignorance of these as an argument for his exerting himself to obtain a superior degree of information. The boy, who has been accustomed to receive daily proofs of his mother's wisdom and knowledge upon important points, will be in no danger of losing his respect for her attainments or understanding, because he finds her ignorant of Latin or of Mathematics. But if, instead of being led to exercise his own judgment, he has been taught every thing as dogmas of our superior wisdom, he will acquiesce in our judgment as infallible, and the disposition implicitly to rely upon authority will render him the slave of prejudice for ever.

This reliance upon authority is represented by some writers as the very essence of female virtue.

> "God is thy law—thou mine ; to know no more,
> Is woman's happiest knowledge, and her praise."

So said Milton : but so said not an higher authority than Milton, when in emphatic language he commended the "better part" taken by Mary, who, not contented with hearing the words of truth and wisdom at second hand, gave her whole soul to the attentive consideration of the divine doctrines it was her happiness to hear delivered. According to the common prejudices of society, the praise was Martha's due. Her attention was solely directed to the objects within her *proper sphere*. Enough for her to hear the heads of her Divine Master's discourse related by her brother, on whose better judgment she might implicitly rely for explanation of all that it was necessary for her to believe or practise. And so certain was she of acting with propriety, that, confident of her own superior merit, she did not scruple to appeal to our Lord upon what she thought the faulty conduct of her sister. The rebuke she received establishes it not only as a privilege, but as a duty, in the sex, to hear, to inquire, and to judge for themselves. The contrary is evidently Anti-Christian doctrine : and, like all others of the same stamp, is found by experience to be repugnant to the principles of common sense.

To the being who is taught to receive all opinions from authority, judgment is an useless gift. In such beings, therefore, judgment will lie for ever dormant; and without judgment, how is she to choose the authorities that are to be her guide? If her early associations of good and evil have been erroneous they must remain erroneous for ever :

for it is by these associations that her choice of authorities will be directed. If the clearest, the most momentous truth be delivered from a quarter against which she has been prejudiced, the truth is contemned as falsehood. If the most flagrant and fatal error has been embraced by the authority she esteems, she receives it "as truth of holy writ."

While by the habits of society women were confined to the narrow circle of domestic life, they received an education, which, if it did not tend to cultivate the judgment in any great degree, introduced those associations which made their resting upon authority innocent at least, if not salutary. To the character of a notable housewife, an extraordinary needle-woman, and a careful mother, they attached ideas of respectability and praise. Their theological, their political, and even their moral opinions they received from their natural or ghostly fathers, "nothing doubting;" and as their attention was solely occupied in the narrow sphere of their perceptive faculties, it is not to be supposed that they troubled themselves with much inquiry. If the higher powers of the mind were not called forth, the first and most essential faculties were so cultivated as to produce that equality which is always favourable to the production of common sense; and in the early cultivation of these first faculties, a foundation was laid for the perfection of all the higher powers of the mind, wherever a superior degree of mental culture was bestowed. Of this we have a decisive proof in the many illustrious instances of female learning and genius, which adorned the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

It was not by means of pretty story books, abridgments, and beauties of history, nor yet by scraps of poetry selected from the best authors, that a lady Jane Gray, or a lady Anne Askew, attained those high accomplishments, and that intellectual energy, which has rendered them the admiration of succeeding ages.

The early education of those celebrated examples of female wisdom and virtue was, probably, in many respects, the same as their contemporaries. Their perceptive faculties were cultivated in infancy by attention. As a means of cultivating attention, needle-work deserves a higher place in our estimation than it at present holds; and the species of needle-work at that period in vogue, was well calculated to answer this important end. That the taste would be improved by contemplating the absurd and grotesque figures which were then copied, I do not pretend to affirm; but as taste is the offspring of judgment and imagination—faculties which do not unfold themselves till after conception has attained strength and vigour—their improvement is the business of an after period: whereas *attention*, being absolutely necessary towards the exercise, of the first and most essential powers of the mind, cannot be too soon or too assiduously cultivated. And how can the power of attention be more effectually called forth, than in copying minute objects, where every thread must be counted with the most scrupulous exactness, where every colour must be matched with the most critical skill?

We view with contempt the tasteless labours of our great grandmothers; but let us remember, that in working the little gold-coloured dog, which, was, perhaps, placed beside a strawberry of six times

his dimensions, and in labouring the feathers of the shapeless peacock, which stood up like " quills upon the fretful porcupine," habits of attention and of application were acquired, which were of no small use in the culture of all the superior faculties. Had the originals from which they copied been more true to nature, still greater advantages would undoubtedly have accrued from this exercise of attention ; but whatever calls this power into exercise in early life, must be essentially useful to the human mind. In this respect the above-mentioned species of needle-work, ridiculous as it may appear, had a manifest advantage over those slighter, though more elegant productions, which requires so little attention as to be executed almost mechanically. These seldom fail to produce habits of mental inactivity. They may be employed as sedatives to ardent minds, but will always be found injurious to the slow and torpid.

Another important advantage, peculiar to the high-born females of former times, was derived from those associations of which I have already taken notice. Ideas of glory were not then attached to every species of singularity that can be achieved by impudence or folly. They were connected with self-approbation, and the esteem of the worthy and the wise. An attention to domestic duties was then deemed honourable—an association which no attainment in the walks of literature could dissolve ; it maintained its ascendancy in the minds of the learned, and was a lamp to the path of the illiterate.

Another great advantage these ladies enjoyed, in the very limited number of books they had it in their power to read. This circumstance produced such frequent and attentive perusal of the few

good authors they possessed, that they became mistresses of every subject on which they treated. Instead of confused and imperfect notions of the author's meaning, their conceptions were clear and accurate; and where there are clear and accurate conceptions, the judgment will be sound and vigorous.

In the acquirement of the learned languages these ladies had many advantages; the very process gone through in attaining them is favourable to arrangement of ideas, and highly instrumental in giving that clear conception of the meaning of words, which is so essential to every species of intellectual improvement. By their intimate acquaintance with the poets, the philosophers, and the orators of antiquity, we find the use they made of the key of those treasures of ancient learning, to which the moderns have been so much indebted for their most brilliant thoughts. But while possessed of all this knowledge, we find that the study of the important doctrines and precepts of christianity occupied the first place in their attention. The human mind had then but lately emancipated from those chains by which the Romish church had so long held her votaries in subjection: upon the points in dispute it was then the fashion to exercise the judgment; and the many great and vigorous minds which were then produced, plainly show that the judgment is never exercised in vain.

A minute investigation into the manner in which these ladies performed the relative and domestic duties of life, would serve to convince us, that it is not by a careful cultivation of all the faculties, by extensive knowledge, or classical learning, that women are in danger of being led from the duties of their proper sphere. No. It is from the silly

vanity which is a consequence of the partial cultivation of the intellectual powers, from false associations, which annex ideas of importance to what is trifling and insignificant, and which connect ideas of glory with the silly admiration of fools and coxcombs—that the mind is effectually perverted. And whence are these false associations derived? By seriously reflecting on the tenor of the ideas which modern education is calculated to produce, the question may be easily resolved!

Adieu.

LETTER IX.

JUDGMENT.

Farther illustrations on the method of cultivating this faculty.—Education of the lower orders.—Religious instruction of the poor, and of the rich.

So much, my dear friend, remains to be said upon the cultivation of judgment, that I must beg leave to give you one other letter upon a subject which is deserving of as many volumes.

We have already seen that the faculties of conception and judgment are coeval: that without vigour and accuracy in the former, the latter must ever remain imperfect; and that where the latter is uncultivated, the former will be in a great measure useless. Tell a child "that he who runs swiftest will soonest reach the goal;" to understand this, the child must have a distinct conception of

running; he must also have been able to make comparisons between different degrees of swiftness, and to conceive a lesser and greater degree of it, before he can acquiesce in your conclusion; which acquiescence is the work of judgment. If any of the former ideas are indistinct, the judgment will rest upon your authority; the child may learn to repeat it as a judgment of his own, but it is in reality not his, but yours: whereas if he has accurate and distinct conceptions on the first part of the proposition, the judgment included in the second is inevitable, and may be termed intuitive.

Where children are taught every thing by lessons, where their perceptive powers are never exercised, and their conceptions never cultivated, all their judgments are received from authority. People who are thus educated, are accordingly as little in the habit of forming opinions for themselves, as of fabricating the clothes they wear. And as without the assistance of the mechanic, the artizan, and the dress-maker, they must, of necessity, go unclothed; so without the assistance of public opinion, would their minds be naked, and destitute of principle or sentiment.

It is upon the preservation of a just balance betwixt the faculties of conception and judgment, that the soundness of the intellect principally depends. This equality in the cultivation of their mental powers compensates, in a great measure, to the vulgar, for the want of that education to which neither their avocations nor circumstances will permit them to aspire. With them attention is confined to a narrow sphere. Their perceptive powers are cultivated but to a certain extent; and this cultivation is entirely under the direction of the imperious mistress, *necessity*.

The conceptions are exercised in the same manner upon few objects, but where the attention is fully given to these, they are, as far as they extend, perfect and distinct. So it is with the judgment: its sphere of operation is narrow; but while it moves in that sphere, it is never erroneous. Hence we find much good sense in the observations of the peasantry, while these observations are confined to subjects upon which they have had access to such information, as could give them clear and distinct ideas.

If the above observations are well founded, it follows, that if the education we bestow upon the labouring classes, be of a nature calculated to derange the just proportion of the faculties; to give a partial cultivation to those which are never to be called forth by the business, or the duties, which the individual is destined to fulfil, while those which are in daily and hourly requisition are utterly neglected; we in reality do more harm than good.

Am I, then, of the number of those who deem the blessing of education improper for the vulgar? Am I one of those children of pride, who wish to see the darkness of ignorance bespread the regions of poverty, while I sit with my compeers elate in Goshen, and enjoy the light? Heaven forbid!

I honour and applaud the noble efforts that have been made, and that are still making, by many generous minds, to give instruction to the children of the poor. Far from wishing to restrain the zeal of charity, I would do all in my power to increase its fervour; but I would wish to direct it into such channels as would most effectually enrich the soil it is the intention of benevolence to cultivate. Happiness, as far as it is attainable by mortals, consists, I think, in the perfect harmony of the soul. All

the turbulent and dissocial passions, as disturbers of this harmony, are inimical to happiness. The partial cultivation of any one of the intellectual faculties is from the same cause injurious. The affections that flow from religious principle, as hope, confidence, love, reverence, gratitude, and joy, are all not only favourable to happiness, but so essential to it, that I do not scruple to affirm that where they are wanting, happiness will never be found.

If these observations upon the nature of happiness appear just, we ought, in our endeavours to promote the happiness and well-being of the lower classes, to keep them in view; if we accept of them as principles, we shall be at no loss how to proceed.

I have already endeavoured to show the early progress of the passions. In this respect the children of the poor and of the rich are pretty much upon a level; they are in truth equally neglected. In early life the children of the villager are as much ruined by foolish indulgence as the children of his lord. The associations which beget a tendency to the selfish and malevolent passions, are with equal facility acquired by both, and are effectually counteracted in neither. The first step, therefore, towards the education of the lower orders is, to instruct the parents in the duties they owe to their children in early life. Books to this effect ought to be distributed; exhortations to be frequently given by the clergy; and rewards bestowed by the contributors to schools, to those parents whose children appear to have reaped most benefit from home instruction and example.

To undertake the education of a poor man's family is, no doubt, a very good and charitable action; but to put the poor man in a way of edu

cating his family himself, is doing infinitely more service to society. (E)

The education of the heart is the work of domestic life, and where this preliminary is neglected, all the endeavours of the school-master will be fruitless. In the religious education of the lower orders, there is seldom, I fear, any appeal made to the heart and the affections. The religion of the vulgar is therefore, in general, gloomy, superstitious, and I had almost said, ferocious. While all the other intellectual faculties are permitted to remain dormant for want of cultivation, the imagination is roused and filled with the darkest images. The tendency of this temper is to produce distrust, suspicion, envy, and malevolence; and when spiritual pride is added, it brings forth arrogance and presumption. This is not the religion of Jesus Christ. Far other are its fruits; widely opposite is its tendency upon the heart!

The first view to be given of the Deity to the poor, as well as to the rich, is as the giver of all good. The universality of his providence and of his protecting care, ought to be carefully instilled. By representing the Supreme to children as a malignant spy and an avenging tyrant, no affections consonant to the spirit of the Gospel can possibly be produced.

Another error in the religious instruction of the poor is addressing ourselves to the judgment, where the conceptions have never been so far opened as to be adequate to the comprehension of the simplest proposition, upon any subject that is not an object of perception. By doing so, we may give religious bigotry, but we shall never impart religious knowledge. The conceptions of the vulgar, or of the high-born, will be clear and accurate, ex-

actly in proportion to the pains which have been bestowed on their cultivation. By one medium only can they, in either case, be cultivated ; and this is, by attention to the objects of perception.

Where the parents are foolish, idle, or profligate, the faculty of attention will never be called forth, or never at least exercised on proper objects. To rescue the children of such parents from the dominion of ignorance and vice, is truly laudable. But where such beings are the objects of our charity, it ought to be our primary endeavour to make up to them for the neglect they have experienced ; which must inevitably have rendered those faculties defective, upon which every species of intellectual improvement ultimately depends.

If we proceed upon other principles, and, without bestowing any pains in cultivating the perceptions, the attention, and the conceptions, vainly imagine that by teaching these poor children to repeat words, we shall strengthen the judgment and improve the heart, we cannot fail to meet with disappointment. In the process of learning to read, the three first faculties are no doubt exercised ; but if this is the only exercise that is given to them, they will reap but little advantage from it : much more would they derive from being made acquainted with the nature and use of all the objects within the sphere of their observation. The simple mechanism employed in the manufactures with which they are most familiar, ought to be explained to them in terms level to their capacity. The attention ought to be turned to the minute examination of every object with which they are conversant. The leather binding of their books, the paper which forms the leaves, the thread on which these leaves are strung, and the characters that are printed on

them, may be made instrumental in invigorating the conceptions: and I am pursuaded, that habits of attention thus acquired would be found of greater use in developing the faculties, than any lessons which the poor ignorant children could be made to read, or get by heart. They ought soon to be made sensible, that all the comforts of human life are the effects of industry, that every article of food or clothing is the product of the labour of many individuals. The co-operation of Divine Providence, without which the labour of man would in many cases be obviously ineffectual, ought to be displayed in the clearest light; to this end such examinations as the following, would be highly salutary.

"What are you going to eat for your breakfast?" 'Bread.' "Who gives you this bread? Your father; but how does your father come by the money which buys it?" 'He earns it by labour.' "But if he were sick, could he thus earn it? By whom is his health preserved? Who makes the bread? What is it made from? Can the farmer cause the wheat to grow? Were the farmer to be idle, and not to sow his land, would God Almighty exert his power to raise him a crop? You then see that the bread you eat, is the blessing of Providence upon industry."

We have already seen that clear and distinct conceptions are necessary towards even the lowest degree of judgment; but there may be conceptions without judgment, as there are conceptions without belief. I may conceive the figure of a horse with wings, though I do not believe that such a creature ever existed. These are not the conceptions on which the minds of children ought to be exercised. They ought to be made to form clear conceptions

on the objects of sense, and on these, also, ought the judgment to be exercised, before it is made to pronounce on the truth or falsehood of propositions that are abstract, and on which their minds must consequently be destitute of all ideas of comparison.

Habits of attention to the objects of perception are so essentially necessary to those who are by their situation destined to be constantly employed upon sensible objects, that we may assure ourselves, when by the education we give to the poor, we incapacitate them for this attention, we do an injury, where we intended to confer a favour.

This point deserves attentive consideration. I could adduce many proofs in support of my opinion concerning it; and make no doubt that many ladies, as well as myself, have experienced disappointment, in the hopes they had formed of making excellent servants by means of an education above the vulgar.

After having inspired a taste for reading, and excited the powers of the imagination, while attention to the cultivation of the objects of perception has been totally omitted, we are surprised to find that the proper business of the servant is neglected. After the most careful cultivation of the reasoning faculties, we are vexed by instances of deficiency in common judgment; and after the most serious pains to impress religious truths and moral sentiments upon the mind, by means of lessons and lectures, we are sometimes pained by discovering proofs of irreligion and immorality.

The cause of this disappointment we may, in many instances, trace to that partial cultivation of the faculties, which, while it ripened those least useful to the possessor, left the first and most essen-

tial powers of the mind in a manner dormant. Happier consequences would, I am persuaded ensue, if, in the education of persons to whom habits of active industry are essential, we make it our endeavour to guard against affording *stimuli* to the imagination. Instead of doing so, we ought to improve the powers of perception ; to rouse attention ; to lead the mind to form clear conceptions upon the common objects and common affairs of life ; and upon these also, to exercise the judgment. It is thus only that we can hope to produce that *common sense*, which is sterling in every region ; the current coin that is equally useful to the high and to the low, to the learned and to the unlearned. It is ever in requisition, ever necessary ; nor can all the stores of wit and knowledge compensate for its absence. As it is in a peculiar manner essential to those who are employed in conducting the common concerns of life, the education by which it can be most effectually cultivated, is surely the best which can be given to such as are doomed to move in a narrow sphere ; and where the education we bestow has not this tendency, it cannot fail to be injurious.

By teaching the poor to read, we put into their hands the most powerful instrument of improvement to all the intellectual faculties ; but if these faculties have received no previous culture, we need not expect that they will ever learn to employ this power to any useful purpose. The question put by the Apostle to the Ethiopian, " Understandest thou what thou readest ?" if put to the children of our charities, might well be answered by them in the words of Candace's prime minister, " How can I, except some man should guide me ?" Is it by teaching

children to repeat strings of judgments upon abstract propositions, which they have no faculties to apprehend, that we expect to give them that understanding of the Scriptures which shall make them wise unto salvation? These judgments may be repeated as distinctly as possible, but it is impossible they should be believed; because *where there is no conception, there can be no belief.* The conceptions must be cultivated, in order to render religious instruction (what by proper care it will not fail to be) the means of improving the judgment, elevating the sentiments, and purifying the heart.

In the infancy of the human race, the Almighty Parent vouchsafed to be the instructer of mankind. Of what nature were the revelations of the divine will which were made to the first ages? Were they upon abstruse points of doctrine? No: the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, manifested throughout the works of creation, afforded an everlasting theme to the inspired writers of the Old Testament.

The poetry of the Hebrews is a continual hymn of praise to the Great Creator. The Supreme Being is there represented as the animating soul of nature. All his works praise him; sun, moon, and stars, show forth his glory. His superintending providence is traced throughout all events from generation to generation; and his superintending care is represented as extending to the wild beasts of the forest, and to the fowls of the heavens!

At most schools for the poor, the children are taught to read in the Old Testament. But are they taught there to read the important lessons I have above described? Alas! no. Their conceptions are never so far opened as to permit these descriptions to excite any emotions in the heart.

These emotions are the less likely to be excited, from not being in unison with the only conceptions of the Deity which have been obtained. These have been awful and terrific, little calculated to excite the feelings of admiration and gratitude ; nor does the way in which they read the Bible tend to give any ideas upon the subject to the mind.

I once paid a visit to a country school, where the children were taught, as usual, to read upon the Bible. The mistress, good woman ! piqued herself upon the knowledge of the stops, which, as she very justly observed, were in general too little attended to at schools of the same description. To show the proficiency of her scholars, one of the best readers was called up. The poor child, taking in its breath, and exalting its voice to the highest pitch, began to scream out some verses in Exodus, repeating every stop aloud with great emphasis, till happily it concluded with a twang at per-i-o-d. I at that time laughed heartily at the ridiculous exhibition, but have since viewed this abuse of the sacred writings in a more serious light.

As we do not profess to have one religion for the poor, and another for the rich, whatever upon this subject applies to one class, applies to all. It was the emphatic description given by our Saviour to prove his divine mission, that *to the poor the Gospel was preached ;* and *by* the poor it was ordained, in the wisdom of Providence, that the glad tidings of salvation should be first dispensed throughout the world.

Before *our* religion, the distinctions formed by human pride vanish; in *its* presence worldly pomp and worldly honours are annihilated. Stript of his adventitious greatness, Man appears as he is : what-

ever be his station, the frail child of dust !—however humble his lot, the heir of immortality !

While all those ideas of equality, which philosophical or interested speculatists have endeavoured to establish, tend to inspire hatred, envy, pride, and discontent ; the equality taught by the Gospel inspires the purest benevolence. It teaches humility to the rich, and contentment to the poor ; and fraternizes (if I may so express myself) the human race.

The opinions I have advanced upon the cultivation of the faculties, receive no slight support from the consideration, that the knowledge of the Scriptures, I mean a true practical knowledge of them, requires not those higher powers of the mind, which must be brought to some degree of perfection before a knowledge of the abstract sciences can be attained. The conceptions must, indeed, have been so far exercised, as to give clear and just ideas ; but the ideas need not be numerous ; and in reading the Old Testament, assistance is given to the mind in forming them, by a perpetual reference to the objects of perception. If the Bible is, however, read merely as an exercise in the art of reading, no ideas are to be expected from it. But if it is referred to as the repository of all useful knowledge ; if it is made use of to awaken the affections, and to call forth the best feelings of the heart ; it will be rendered an effectual mean of improving the conceptions, and enlightening the judgment. The history of the creation, and of all the events antecedent to the dispensation of the Mosaic law, are recorded in terms of such beautiful simplicity, that they are calculated to make a strong impression upon the minds of children. To make this impression useful, it is not sufficient that the

facts are known, nor that the firmest belief in their reality be established in the mind. It is the providence of God which animates the scene. Confidence or faith in this providence is represented as forming the virtue of the patriarchs; it is this by which they are distinguished from the savages of other ages, and of other nations. The knowledge of the true God was the inheritance of the Hebrews; it breathes in every line of their sacred writings; elevating the conceptions to a pitch of sublimity beyond what mere learning or genius has ever yet attained. The idea of the Supreme, as the father and preserver, not only of the human race, but of the brute creation, is calculated to inspire feelings of compassion, mingled with devotional sentiment; and ought particularly to be dwelt upon to those, who from their situation in life, have it in their power to exercise humanity, or the contrary, upon the inferior animals. The cruelty that we see daily exercised upon brutes is shocking to every feeling heart; and were lessons upon this subject enforced, as they may be, by the authority of Scriptures, to be given at our charity-schools, it would be of service to humanity.

When the affections have been thus awakened, and the powers of conception and judgment in some degree opened, the history of the Jewish nation will not only gratify curiosity, but excite surprize, wonder, and it may be, some degree of indignation and discontent. Why was this people, weak and wicked as they are by their own prophets described to be, the chosen people of God? Children, who by a more liberal education have had the sphere of their knowledge enlarged, are still more apt to indulge in these anxious doubts, which, if silenced by the voice of authority, may end in total

scepticism. The vulgar, taking every thing literally, are apt to fall into an error no less fatal; and to conceive, that vices which were committed by the *people of God*, cannot be considered as unpardonable offences.

It is, therefore, of great importance, to make it plain to young people, as soon as we perceive these doubts to have a place in their minds, that the descendants of Abraham were not chosen by God to set forth to the world an example of pure and heroic virtue. They were separated from the rest of mankind by peculiar laws and ceremonies, in order to preserve the knowledge of the *one only* and *true God;* and divided into tribes, who each preserved an accurate account of its genealogy from him in whom it was promised "that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed," in order to prove the accomplishment of that promise in the birth of the Messiah. The immoral conduct of the people thus highly favoured with superior light, showed, in the strongest colours, the necessity of a revelation yet more perfect than had been granted to their fathers. To faith in the directing and protecting providence of God, was to be added a faith still more powerful and efficacious.

Thus may children be led by degrees to a knowledge of the New Testament dispensation.

While the Scriptures are thus opened to them, they will, like the disciples on their journey to Emmaus, find their hearts burn within them. The history of their Redeemer's life and sufferings, of his meritorious death, and glorious ascension, will awaken each amiable affection, each interesting feeling of the heart. They will see, that as protecting providence was the boon promised to the believers in the first revelation, divine grace is the

peculiar promise of the second. They will perceive, that by iniquity and impenitence both may be forfeited; and thus the necessity of a strict adherence to the moral duties will be made clear and evident, and piety and morality be so strongly associated in their minds, as to prevent a tendency to superstition on the one hand, and to enthusiasm on the other. For this profitable knowledge of the Scriptures, neither genius, nor learning, nor abstract reasoning, are necessary. The deductions from the first principle of a Supreme Being, eternal, wise, and good, are a series of self-evident propositions, which require only a moderate power of conception and strength of judgment to comprehend. Cultivated imagination is here of no use; and in reading the Scriptures, sincerity and simplicity of heart are more essential requisites than all the critic's lore.

Among those who have studied the Scriptures as critics, and who, in reading the sacred writings, have entirely applied themselves to the discovery of recondite knowledge, endeavouring in each obscure passage to find a support to some previously adopted system, I have found many who are declared enemies to affording Scriptural instruction to the poor; many who think that the Bible ought by no means to be put into the hands of youth: but never did I meet with one who had been taught to apply its precepts and its doctrines *to the heart*, that harboured any apprehension of the consequences of giving Scriptural knowledge to the otherwise illiterate. It is this application of the sacred writings which it ought to be the instructer's aim to teach. If, instead of this salutary application of the divine commandments, we go about to establish our own righteousness, by interpreting the judgments de-

nounced against sin into the condemnation of those who differ from us in opinion, we shall, indeed, reap little advantage from Scripture knowledge. Comments of this nature, are, I am afraid, but too common: and as they are the natural result of a partial application of particular passages, they can only be prevented by leading the mind to seek for the *general meaning* in the *general spirit* of the gospel writers; which, if done with sincerity, will always bring some salutary truth home to the bosom. Striking are the lessons that are given upon this head by our blessed Lord. Let us labour to impress them in such a manner as to render the reading of the Scriptures "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

It is in order to effect this application of the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel to the heart, that I would gradually prepare the heart for their reception. I have, as I am informed, given umbrage to some pious minds by what I advanced upon this subject in the former volume. This information has induced me scrupulously to re-examine all the arguments upon which my opinion was formed; with a firm resolution of freely acknowledging error, wherever I found it. No arguments, indeed, were offered by those who differ from me, to assist me in this research. By these I might, perhaps, have been more effectually enlightened; but I confess, that after having given all the attention to the subject of which I am capable, I still remain of opinion, *that where there are no conceptions, there can be no belief;* and that to force articles of belief upon the mind, before the conceptions have been so far opened as to afford the possible exercise of judgment, (the faculty by which we alone

determine on the truth or falsehood of propositions) can have no other consequence, than to produce either a blind and bigoted adherence to unexamined principles, a total indifference to all principle, or the extremes of scepticism and infidelity.

Greatly have they mistaken me, who imagine that it is from a light estimation of the peculiar doctrines of christianity, that I am led to disapprove of the means which are sometimes taken to enforce them upon the infant mind. It is my respect for these doctrines, my opinion of their importance, and my conviction of their being found consonant to truth and reason, which leads me to recommend with earnestness, that they may be so enforced as that the heart and the understanding may be equalled impressed with their truth. In this all ranks of society are alike concerned ; and it is therefore my opinion, that the religious education of the poor and of the rich, ought to be conducted upon the same principles. By cultivating the affections of the infant heart, and inspiring towards the great Creator feelings of gratitude, reverence, hope, confidence, and love, the conceptions will be opened towards the perception of moral truth ; the judgment will thus be exercised, and when it is sufficiently matured to perceive the importance of the doctrines of the Gospel, then, and then only, will they be received and cherished so as to yield the fruits of faith and righteousness.

The period when this degree of maturity takes place, it must be left to the preceptor to determine. I should, however, by all means recommend, that the fundamental principles of religion and morality be deeply impressed upon the mind before imagination begins to predominate.

When the judgment has been previously strengthened by religious principle, imagination will ever afterwards submit to the control of reason; but if we permit imagination to take the lead, the religious principles and opinions of our pupils will receive from this faculty such a colouring, as may have very fatal consequences. Superstition and enthusiasm are the Scylla and Charibdis of sound and rational piety. In order to avoid the former, care must be taken to watch over those early associations which connect ideas of good and evil with circumstances which are trivial or indifferent; and to preserve from the latter, imagination must be put under the regulation of judgment.

Adieu.

LETTER X.

IMAGINATION AND TASTE.

Imagination defined.—Necessity of its operations being guided by judgment.—Illustrations.—Definition of taste.—Mistakes concerning the cultivation of this faculty.—Union of conception and judgment essential to its cultivation.—Illustrations.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE necessity I feel myself under of compressing into the limits of a single letter the observations that occur to me on the subjects of imagination and taste, will compel me to be concise; I shall, however, endeavour to be as little obscure as possible.

The word imagination has great latitude in its application. It is sometimes employed to denote simple apprehension ; it being very usual in common conversation to say, that we cannot imagine how such a thing could happen, when we mean, that we cannot conceive it. In this sense, you will observe, that I have carefully avoided employing it. It is sometimes likewise applied in a general way, to express the operation of the mind in thinking ; and in this incorrect way of speaking, we frequently observe, that a thing occupies the imagination, when, in reality, it is the subject of reflection.

Again ; the term imagination is sometimes made use of in describing the intellectual pleasures and pursuits, in contra-distinction to those of sense. In this way it is applied by Dr. Akenside, whose poem on the Pleasures of the Imagination describes the employment of all the intellectual faculties.

By imagination, in the sense to which I have confined myself, is understood that power of the mind, which is exerted in forming new combinations of ideas. The power of calling up at pleasure any particular class of ideas is properly denominated fancy. A creative imagination implies not only the power of fancy, but judgment, abstraction, and taste. Where these are wanting, the flights of imagination are little better than the ravings of a lunatic.

From the nature of this faculty, it is obvious, that it can be exercised but in a very slight degree in childhood, the ideas being at that period too few in number to afford materials for new combinations ; or should the attempt at forming them be made, they must, from want of taste and judgment, be weak and imperfect. But long before the mind can combine for itself, the conceptions are sufficiently vigorous to enter with avidity into the com-

binations made by others. If these are so artfully contrived as to interest the passions, or to excite the emotions of terror, hope, indignation, or sympathy, they become the most pleasing exercises of the juvenile mind ; but if this exercise be frequently repeated, it will infallibly produce trains of thought, highly unfavourable to the cultivation of those important faculties, without whose aid the creative power of imagination can never be exerted to any useful purpose.

While the mind is occupied in making observations on the nature and properties of the objects of sense, its train of thought is merely a series of simple conceptions ; but these conceptions are the materials with which imagination is at a proper time to work. On these conceptions, too, does judgment begin its operations ; by these, is it exercised into strength ; and by such exercise alone it is, that it can ever attain perfection. These operations are, as I suspect, greatly retarded, and in some instances utterly prevented, by a premature disposition to make attempts at combination ; the inevitable consequence of having the mind powerfully impressed by interesting fictions. After every such impression, the train of thought flows for a considerable time in the same channel with the emotion that has been excited : and before judgment has attained the capability of directing its combinations, the images that are formed must of necessity be wild and incoherent. However incoherent they may be, they have such a tendency to increase the flow of ideas, and of consequence, to augment vivacity, that such children appear to much greater advantage, than those whose faculties are cultivated in the natural order. But when both arrive at maturity, they who have laid in the greatest fund of clear,

distinct, and accurate ideas, must possess a manifest advantage.

Were imagination (as is unfortunately too often supposed,) a simple faculty, which could be exercised to advantage without the assistance of the other faculties, the methods usually taken to cultivate it would be judicious and effectual. But if it be in fact a compound of several other faculties, it necessarily follows, that its excellence depends on the degree of perfection, to which the faculties connected with it have arrived. The Iliad of Homer is a work of imagination ; it exhibits a series of combinations, perhaps more astonishing in their variety, harmony, and consistency, than any that human genius has ever produced ; but does it not in every line give a proof of clear and vigorous conceptions, of strong judgment, and profound reflection ? When our own Shakspeare, whose elevated genius

" Exhausted worlds, and then imagined new,"

pourtrayed the character of Caliban, (who is certainly a creature of the poet's imagination) did not judgment evidently guide the pencil, and lay on the colours ? From the incomparable productions of these extraordinary men, we may justly infer, that all the faculties of the mind were by them possessed in an uncommon degree of vigour, and therefore conclude them to have been cultivated according to the order assigned by nature.

In a living author, whose remote situation will apologize for a comparison which would otherwise seem invidious, we see a still further proof of our argument. In the power of imagination, (taken according to its simple definition) it is probable, that

Kotzebue does not yield to either of the poets above-mentioned. But what are the combinations which his genius has produced ? I have no intention of turning critic, and therefore shall decline answering the question, but think it not out of my province to observe, that if a deficiency in the powers of accurate conception and sound judgment are laid to his charge, he has given us a clue to lead to the cause of this deficiency in his memoirs, where he describes his mother having, while he was yet a child, assiduously cultivated his imagination by the powerful emotions excited by romantic fiction. He tells us, " she was a woman of sensibility, and delighted in inspiring him with a taste for works of imagination, of which he soon grew enthusiastically fond." Of old Mrs. Shakspeare we know nothing ; but from the sound judgment exhibited in the works of her son, I think the probability is, that instead of being a woman of *sensibility* (in the sense Kotzebue employs the term) she was a woman of plain good sense.

To produce a work of genius, the power of imagination must be possessed in a very eminent degree ; but unless a certain portion of the same imagination be possessed by the reader, the works of genius will never be perused with delight. Nothing can be relished but in proportion as it is understood ; and thoroughly to understand an author, we must be able, with the rapidity of thought, to enter into all his associations. This can never be done by those who possess a very limited stock of ideas. The beautiful allusions which at once illustrate and adorn the works of the learned, are lost upon those who are unacquainted with classical literature ; and we may be assured, that many of the beauties of the ancient orators and poets, are in like manner

lost upon the learned of our days, from their ignorance of the associations which produced them. A small number of ideas will, indeed, suffice to pursue a simple narrative; and accordingly we find that narrative, either of real or fictitious events, is the only sort of reading which is relished by the uncultivated mind. Do we wish to inspire a taste for studies of a higher order? Then let us lay a solid foundation for such a taste, in the cultivation of all those faculties which are necessary to the proper exercise of imagination. Let us by the exercise of the reasoning powers, as well as of the conception and the judgment, produce that arrangement in the ideas, which is alike favourable to invention and to action. In such minds the trains of associated ideas are, if I may so express myself, harmonized by truth. The ideas being numerous, distinct, and just, are called up in proper order; and as arrangement in our associations is the true key of memory, every idea that is wanted obeys the call of will. It is then that the power of imagination comes forth to irradiate the mind, and to give a new zest to the charm of existence. The combinations which it then presents, arranged by judgment, selected by taste, and elevated by the sublime ideas of divine perfection, give an exercise to all the intellectual powers.

"What employment can *he* have worthy of a man, whose imagination is occupied only about things *low* and *base*, and grovels in a narrow field of mean, unanimating, and uninteresting objects?" and such must ever be the case with him whose ideas are few, confused, and inaccurate; and who, while incapable of expanding his mind to embrace the forms of general and abstract truth, has habitually employed his imagination on the chimeras of

untutored fancy; such a person must be "insensible to those finer and more delicate sentiments, and blind to those more enlarged and nobler views, which elevate the soul, and make it conscious of its dignity.

"How different from him, whose imagination, like an eagle in her flight, takes a wide prospect, *and observes whatever it presents*, that is new or beautiful, grand or important; whose rapid wing varies the scene every moment, carrying him through the fairy regions of wit or fancy, sometimes through the more regular and sober walks of science and philosophy.

"The various objects which he surveys, according to their different degrees of beauty and dignity, raise in him the lively and agreeable emotions of taste. Illustrious human characters as they pass in review, clothed with their moral qualities, touch his heart still more deeply. They not only awaken the sense of beauty, but excite the sentiment of approbation, and kindle the glow of virtue. While he views what is truly great and glorious in human conduct, his soul catches the divine flame, and burns with desire to emulate what it admires."*

The reveries of such a mind are not only delightfully amusing; but salutary and useful. On the gay pictures delineated by fancy, judgment, reason, and the moral sense, exert their powers of criticism; and thus the casual combinations of imagination are made a means of improvement to the heart.

I have known a young person, prone to indulge in the reveries presented by a rich and lively im-

* Reid.

agination, who acknowledged that it was by reflecting, on these spontaneous effusions of fancy, that she became acquainted with the propensities and imperfections of her own temper and disposition. In her dreams of future felicity, she found that the gratification of vanity was always included, or indeed formed the ground-work of the piece; she accordingly set herself to root out a propensity which she thus discovered to be predominant. When mortified by the pride of others, she found fancy immediately busied in forming scenes whereon she was to act the superior part, and to retort the mortification on those by whom her feelings had been wounded. Conscience took the alarm, and taught her to apply to the Throne of Grace for the christian spirit of true himility. Thus was imagination rendered subservient to religion, judgment, and reason; and while it acts under such control, we may safely pronounce it the first of human blessings!

Where the imagination has been injudiciously stimulated at an early period, it has little chance of ever coming under this species of regulation. The attention having been habitually engaged in pursuing the dreams of fiction, loses a thousand opportunities of information and improvement, and the number of ideas must consequently be extremely circumscribed. The judgment having never been exercised on realities, can only compare ideas that are equally imperfect, and consequently be for ever liable to error. An expectation that the same causes should always produce similar effects, will to the mind which has been exercised in fiction, be attended with the most fatal consequences; the real events of life succeeding each other in a very different train from that in

which they are represented in such productions. The false associations that are thus produced in the mind, may not only mislead the judgment, but, as I have endeavoured elsewhere to show, may effectually pervert the heart—the sensibility excited by fictious representations of human misery, being very far from that genuine spirit of benevolence that is actively exerted in alleviating the distresses which it cannot remove. Where the judgment has been strengthened by observation, and habits of active benevolence have been, in some measure, acquired, and confirmed by religious principle, then, indeed, the luxurious tear, called forth by the witching power of imagination, may be indulged with safety; for its source will not then be mistaken. But where by imagination sensibility has been brought into existence, to the woes of imagination will sensibility be confined; and far too sickly will be its constitution, to produce the active charities of life.

Taste is so intimately connected with imagination, that many of the observations applicable to the one will be found to reach the other. The emotion of taste, though simple in its operation, is derived from complex sources. Its very existence depends on the vigour of conception, and implies the exercise of judgment. Nor are these faculties alone equal to the production of this delightful emotion; as we may be convinced, by observing the numbers of persons who possess these faculties in an eminent degree, who, nevertheless, are incapable of experiencing the emotions of taste. Without a certain portion of sensibility, I believe, true taste is never found. How much this sensibility depends upon organization, I cannot presume to determine; but that it is seldom the boon of un-

cultivated minds, experience affords us convincing proofs.

To perceive and to enjoy whatever is beautiful or sublime in the works of nature or of art, is the peculiar privilege of taste. Its emotions are accordingly divided by an author,* to whose elegant and judicious remarks I confess many obligations, into "the *emotions of sublimity*, and *the emotions of beauty*."

"The qualities that produce these emotions, are to be found in almost every class of the objects of human knowledge, and the emotions themselves afford one of the most extensive sources of human delight. They occur to us amid every variety of external scenery, and among many diversities of disposition and affection in the mind of man. The most pleasing arts of human invention are altogether directed to their pursuit; and even the necessary arts are exalted into dignity by the genius that can unite beauty with use."

That a susceptibility to the emotion of taste does not altogether depend upon the original frame of our nature, is evident from its being entirely confined to minds possessing a certain degree of cultivation; whereas the emotions of surprise, joy, wonder, &c. are felt by all. Nor is the mind of the most cultivated at all times equally susceptible of these emotions. All must know that there are moments when objects of sublimity or beauty make no impression. All must have experienced, that scenes which have at one period called forth the most vivid sensations of delight, have at another been viewed with the most perfect indifference.

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* See Alison on Taste.

The more deeply we examine this curious subject, the more fully shall we be convinced, that the emotions of taste entirely depend on the train of ideas which are called up in the mind by certain objects of perception. If the mind has not been previously furnished with a store of ideas that can be thus associated, the finest objects of sublimity or beauty will never give a pleasurable sensation to the breast. They may be viewed with wonder, with admiration, but will never produce emotions of sublimity or beauty.

The above observations may be further illustrated, by reflecting on the manner in which a taste for the beauties of nature in the material world, and for the beauties of poetry, enhance each other. A young mind, accustomed to the contemplation of rural scenery, is enraptured by the poetical descriptions which present a transcript of all that had so often charmed the imagination,

"When Nature charms, for life itself is new."

The elevated sentiments and sublime ideas of the poet give, on the other hand, a number of new associations which are henceforth called up by the scenes of nature, and become to the mind of sensibility a new and inexhaustible source of delight.

By the ideas associated with them, a thousand sounds that are in themselves indifferent, nay, some that are rather in their natures disagreeable, become pregnant with delight. I have for this last half-hour been leaning on my elbow, listening to the distant tinkling of the sheep-bell, a sound so perfectly in unison with the surrounding scenery, as to appear enchantingly delightful. Upon reflection, I believe it to be just such a bell as is tied to

the pie-man's basket, which I have often in town deemed an execrable nuisance. The different emotions which it now excites can only be resolved into the different trains of ideas with which the sound is associated.*

My narrow limits will not permit me to go into this subject at sufficient length; but the hints I have suggested, will, if pursued with any attention, infallibly lead us to conclude, that the foundation of the emotions of taste, with regard to natural objects and to poetical description, must be laid in distinct and accurate conceptions. By these must the ideas be accumulated, which, by the laws of association, are formed into distinct trains; which like the genii of Aladin's lamp, appear the moment the enchanter imagination is disposed to call them. Without some pains taken in the cultivation of the faculty of conception, we may learn to criticise upon the laws of taste; but we shall never be subject to its influence.

In creating a susceptibility to the emotions of taste, we shall find a powerful assistant in devotional sentiment. The mind that has been accustomed to associate the ideas of Infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, with all that is striking in the works of nature, must have a peculiar tendency to the emotions of sublimity and beauty. It is

* I once knew a lady who had been brought up in one of the most confined streets of the city of London, where her father had, by dint of industry, accumulated a large fortune. When complaining of her hard fate, in being obliged upon her marriage to leave the metropolis for the dull sameness of a country life, she drew a striking picture of the joys she had unwillingly relinquished. "*There*, (she said) she never knew what it was to be lonely; for besides the bustle all day long in the street of carts and coaches, there were forty coopers in the back-yard, who were knock, knocking, from morning till night!" Does not this strongly evince the power of association in forming our ideas of harmony?

thus that sensibility may be properly and effectually awakened. The train of thought which devotional sentiment excites, is so highly favourable to the cultivation of refined taste, that I greatly question whether its emotions were ever excited, where sensibility had not been thus called forth. So necessary is it towards the perfection of the human mind, that the cultivation of the affections should go hand in hand with that of intellect!

It is no small incitement to the cultivation of taste, to reflect, that the emotions of sublimity and beauty are connected, not only with our devotional, but with our moral feelings. They coalesce not with any of the dissocial or malevolent passions; and can never be experienced while the mind is under their influence. By rendering the mind susceptible of the emotions of taste, we not only expand the circle of human pleasures, but as every emotion, of which the heart is capable, has a tendency to produce emotions that are in the same key, we give an additional chord, if I may so express it, to the harmony of the virtues. To those who are by their situation in society exempted from the cares and perplexities of business, it is of the last importance to have a sufficient number of such objects and pursuits, as may serve fully to occupy the time which is thus left to their disposal. The intellectual powers have little chance of being called forth, in any eminent degree, where there are no difficulties to stimulate the energies of the soul, and no object to rouse its activity. The love of knowledge is, indeed, an active principle; and for that reason, cannot be too assiduously cultivated in the minds of those who are born to the privilege or the *curse* of leisure: but if to the love of knowledge, we do not add a susceptibility to

the emotions of taste, the mind will be apt to languish, and to seek resources in those fatal scenes of dissipation, where every virtuous disposition and manly sentiment are soon obliterated.

The emotions of taste, are, I believe, particularly congenial to the female mind; but it deserves our serious inquiry, how far the common mode of female education tends to cultivate, or to destroy, this natural susceptibility. When we hear a mother speak of giving her daughters *a taste for music, and a taste for painting*, we may, nine times in ten, conclude, that she means nothing more by the expression, than exciting in her children an ambition to exhibit to advantage their practical skill in these accomplishments. For this purpose, the methods generally adopted are obviously so successful, as to render it unnecessary to suggest any improvement.

With the idea of excelling in those accomplishments is associated every idea of glory and approbation. To render the road to excellence easy of access, diffidence and modesty are banished from the youthful mind; the veil of bashfulness is torn aside by vanity, and every art made use of to render the gentle pupil callous to the public gaze. Vanity, aided by example, and stimulated by ambition, does wonders. The attention is exerted in the art of imitation, and its power is never exerted in vain. Where the best models are procured, the copies will in time be excellent. The music-master who has taste, will teach his pupils to make use of graces, which will serve as a succedaneum for that which he has it not in his power to confer; and rapid execution must inevitably be attained by unwearied application.

All this may, I confess, be accomplished without the cultivation of a single faculty of the mind,

excepting those of perception and attention; but to confound this paltry art of imitation with the idea of taste is no less absurd, than if we were to call the compositor, who arranges the types for an edition of Homer, the Prince of Poets!

The emotion of taste with regard to musical composition, depends upon association no less than it does with regard to the other objects of our perceptions.

Single sounds, we well know, are accounted agreeable or disagreeable, according to the ideas which they excite. On examination, we shall find that those which particularly strike us as sublime or beautiful, never fail to produce certain trains of ideas in the mind; which, if accidentally broken, the emotions of sublimity or beauty are annihilated. An instance or two will sufficiently elucidate this truth. What sound so sublime as a peal of thunder? the emptying of a cart of stones in the street may be mistaken for it, and while the deception lasts, will produce the emotions of sublimity in their fullest extent; but let us discover our mistake, and what becomes of the emotions of sublimity? The melodious notes of the nightingale have been well imitated on the stage; but did they there produce the same emotions of beauty, as when heard in the stillness of the solemn grove?

Music, which is a continuation of sounds, may from the various combinations of which it is capable, be rendered highly expressive of the tender, the plaintive, the melancholy, the cheerful, or the gay. It may be rendered elevating or depressing, soothing the soul to sadness, or exhilarating to the tone of pleasure. Now that every one of these various emotions are occasioned by the production of certain trains of ideas connected by the laws of

association, I think no person of reflection will dispute. The person who is not susceptible of these emotions, may attain a knowledge of the laws of composition, and, acquainted with the difficulty attending the execution of laborious passages, may admire the art of the performer; but this admiration is perfectly distinct from the emotion of taste. To obtain this species of applause, is the sole aim of a number of composers, whose ambition is amply gratified by the approbation of the vulgar many: but it is the man of real taste alone, who, either in his compositions or performance, can excite the emotions of sublimity or beauty.

That the number is so few, will not be matter of surprise, when we reflect that the person who would call forth the emotions of taste, either in the disposition of material objects, or in any of the fine arts, must be capable of entering into all those associations that are connected with the tones of mind which he wishes to produce. Whatever rudely breaks these trains of ideas, utterly destroys the effect. Every person of taste, who has heard the Messiah of Handel performed at Westminster-Abbey, and at the play-house, must be sensible of the advantage with which this sublime composition was heard at the former place, where every object tended to produce associations in unison with the tone of the performance. At the play-house these associations were forcibly broken, trains of discordant ideas obtruded themselves on the mind, and thus the effect was lost.

Why is our church-music in general so poor, so deficient in sublime expression, and so ill calculated to produce the sublimity of devotional sentiment? Why, but because the sublimity of devo-

tional sentiment was unknown to the composers. Had the musical compositions of David happily been handed down to us, I make no doubt, we should have in them examples of the elevated and sublime in music, which would have harmonized with the tone of his own inimitable poetry. (F)

From the tenor of these observations, I hope it has been made clear, that a taste for the fine arts can only be cultivated by the same means which must be employed to lay the foundation of taste in general, viz. a careful improvement of all the intellectual faculties. If the conceptions have not been rendered clear and accurate, and the attention roused to give them constant employment, so as to lay in a large stock of ideas upon every subject; if the judgment has not been exercised upon the agreement and disagreement of ideas; and if the powers of abstraction and imagination have not been called forth; it is impossible that the emotions of taste should ever be experienced. It is not by constantly practising at a musical instrument, or by handling the pencil, that taste for painting or for music can possibly be acquired. But let the basis of taste be fixed, and then by rendering your pupils capable of the practical part of these accomplishments, you enlarge the sphere of their innocent enjoyments, and afford them the opportunity of communicating pleasure to others.

The mother who is superior to the chains of fashion, and who is capable of taking an extensive view of the probabilities of human life, as well as of weighing the talents of her children with accurate impartiality, will decide with wisdom and precision on the value of those accomplishments, which must inevitably be purchased at the expense of a large portion of time and attention. Does the

mind appear destitute of that energy which is necessary to give a zest to the intellectual pleasures, she will readily perceive the advantage which may be derived to such a mind, from having at all times the power of gratifying itself by an elegant and innocent amusement. But if her children possess sufficient intellectual vigour to find full employment from other sources, she will, perhaps, content herself with cultivating in them that taste for the fine arts in general, which will at all times insure them the most exquisite gratification.

To such minds sources of delight open on every side. Every scene in nature presents some object calculated to call forth trains of ideas, which either interest the heart, or amuse the fancy. But if the time in which the mind ought naturally to be employed in accumulating those ideas, be devoted to acquiring a facility of execution at a musical instrument, it is evident no such ideas can be called forth. I once travelled four hundred miles in company with an accomplished young gentleman, who made, in the course of the journey, but one solitary observation, and that was called forth by an extensive moorish fen, where he said he was sure there was abundance of snipes! Read the observations of St. Fond, on going over the same ground, and observe the rich variety of ideas presented to the man of science by objects which are to the vulgar eye barren of delight. Follow the elegant Gilpin through the same tour, and mark the emotions which the various scenery of natural landscape excites in the mind of the man of taste. Who that is capable of weighing the value of the mind's enjoyments in the scale of truth and reason, will not instantly perceive, how much the balance preponderates in favour of those who have such a rich

variety of associations, when put in competition with the superficially accomplished? Let science and taste unite in the same mind, and you prepare materials for a constant feast.

As painting is now become a fashionable accomplishment, little less generally cultivated than music, it may be expected that I should make a few observations that may particularly apply to it. It is a subject on which I have no assistance from the writings of others; in what I say upon it I have, therefore, no guide but my own feelings and my own judgment, and in such circumstances it becomes me to express myself with diffidence.

The pleasure we receive from painting appears to be derived from two very unequal sources. The first, and greatest, is from the emotions of sublimity or of beauty; which in painting, as in all other subjects, depend on the train of associated ideas. The more perfect the work of the artist, the more perfect the emotion; which is so powerful in a mind of sensibility, that it must be permitted, in some degree, to subside, before we are capable of examining with minute attention the sources from which it is derived. These are various, as design, expression, colouring, &c.; but if these were not in perfect harmony with each other, we may be assured the emotion of taste would not be produced in any powerful degree.

The second source of pleasure in painting is the accuracy of imitation. This corresponds to the facility of execution in the musical performer; both are sources of a certain degree of admiration and surprise, but are equally distinct from the emotions of taste. Where taste has not been previously cultivated, painting will never advance beyond an imitative art; and as the happy imitation of nature

depends upon vigorous conception, it cannot be expected, that those who have not had their conceptions exercised upon natural objects, can ever produce any imitations which will be worthy of even this inferior species of admiration. Masters may, indeed, give them rules of perspective, and teach them to daub on abundance of pretty colours with striking effect; but if taste be wanting, the lessons of a Raphael will be thrown away. Examples, on the other hand, are not wanting, to show what progress in this delightful art may be made with little instruction from masters, where real taste is guided by judgment and warmed by a brilliant imagination. I have the pleasure of knowing many ladies who so excel; but not one uncultivated mind is of the number.

Taste in the form of ornamental decoration, whether in articles of dress or furniture, is so much under the influence of the tyrant *fashion*, that it can no longer be styled a simple emotion. Fashion depends so evidently upon association, that it must be traced to that source by the least reflecting mind; but the associations to which it owes its wonderful ascendancy, are merely those which connect the ideas of esteem and admiration with the splendour of rank and elevated situation. The form of dress that is worn by those we account patterns of gentility, is associated with the ideas of respect and admiration, which we are accustomed to cherish towards those of a certain rank; or with the ideas of a distinction still more flattering, which constitutes the glory of gay and youthful beauty. When the same form of dress descends to the vulgar, the change that takes place in our associations strips it of its adventitious lustre, and affixes to the very same object which had before

called forth our admiration, ideas of meanness and contempt.

If the sovereignty of fashion be so absolute, what use, you will say, is there in the cultivation of just and refined taste, which cannot overturn her decrees?

Notwithstanding the influence which fashion has over our opinions, taste has still a very important part to act; and if true taste (of which judgment is a necessary constituent) were properly cultivated, all the evils arising from the powerful influence of fashion would be completely done away.

Taste rejects whatever is incongruous; it requires fitness and harmony, and therefore taste will always reject the affectation of singularity. It will always, for this reason, adopt the mode of the present fashion; but it will adopt it under such limitations, as are agreeable to its general principles. Wherever cultivated taste prevails, one general sentiment, whether of simplicity or magnificence, will pervade the scene. In the furniture of the house, in the economy of the table, the same predominant idea will be expressed; and every ornament will be rejected, that does not give additional force to the expression. If inanimate objects can be so disposed as to produce an undivided emotion, surely the decorations of the human form ought to be able to produce the same effect. There true taste must revolt with inexpressible disgust from whatever does not perfectly harmonize with the character. Where purity, modesty, and virtue dwell in the heart, it is not taste that will decorate the form with the fleering dress of the wanton.

A knowledge of the principles of taste, would teach our sex to preserve the appearance of mod-

esty at least, even if the reality were wanting. In female beauty, I believe no one will deny, that softness graced with dignity, modesty, gentleness, and purity, are ideas that perfectly harmonize with the object. Let these associations be broken by discordant images, and the emotion of beauty will be no longer felt.

"But," (says Miss Pert) "young men are strangers to the emotions of taste; to please them other associations must be excited. By dressing in the style of women of a certain description, we call up trains of ideas favourable to passion."

True, young woman; but know that she who glories in this species of conquest, degrades herself beneath the rank of those she imitates, and stands upon the brink of a precipice, with nothing but a little pride betwixt her and destruction. Few, however, very few of the numbers who adopt modes of dress highly incongruous with sentiments of modesty, are influenced by any other motive than the desire of being in the very extreme of fashion. The cultivation of taste would modify this species of ambition in the young; and would lead those who have arrived at the sober autumn of life, to adopt that mode of decoration which harmonizes with the season. (G)

The principles of which I have here given an imperfect sketch, are of universal application. They extend not merely to the disposition of material objects, but have an important connexion with moral conduct and behaviour. It is in these principles that the laws of propriety originate. From them they derive their authority; and the period in which fashion gives a sanction to such modes of conduct as the principles of taste condemn, is the epoch of depravity.

It may now be expected, that I should proceed to give some hints respecting the cultivation of taste and imagination; I shall not, however, swell the size of my letter by laying down rules, which the foregoing investigation must have rendered in some measure unnecessary. I have endeavoured to prove, that unless we have assiduously cultivated the faculty of attention, and directed it to such objects as may enlarge the stock of useful ideas; unless we have awakened the curiosity, invigorated the conceptions, and enlightened the judgment; we can have no hopes of introducing those trains of thought which are the loftiest exercise of imagination, or those associations which are the source of refined taste.

Where the preliminary steps have been taken, and Nature has granted to the character a common share of sensibility, the preceptor will find the cultivation of imagination an easy task. True taste is more difficult of acquirement. But where the first faculties of the mind have been duly cultivated, and the pupil is then directed to such subjects as are calculated to elevate the tone of feeling, and awaken the sympathies of the human heart, there is no doubt that the principles of taste will be understood, felt, and practised.

Should our efforts prove unsuccessful, it is in the neglect of the early affections that we shall probably find the cause of our disappointment. If we have suffered pride, self-will, arrogance, hatred, envy, or any other malignant passion, to gain an ascendancy in the disposition, we need not expect that taste will be either felt or cultivated. Its emotions were never known to the selfish; they harmonize with the most generous feelings of our nature, and seek alliance with all the virtues!

Adieu.

LETTER XI.

ABSTRACTION.

Different modes of reasoning.—Use of general terms.—Generalization: its peculiar advantages illustrated.—Deficiency in the power of abstraction: its consequences, &c.

THE subject upon which I am now to enter, has so seldom been addressed to any but the learned, and so seldom treated of but in the abstruse language of metaphysicians, that to render it familiar to such as have never been accustomed to read, to converse, or to think upon the operations of the human mind, may be not a little difficult. I am, however, encouraged to hope, that the difficulty is not altogether insurmountable, being fully persuaded, that many who never heard the term ABSTRACTION made use of, except where it was meant to denote absence of mind, are, nevertheless, possessed of the faculty, and capable of employing it to the best purposes. Such readers may, perhaps, be as much surprised to find themselves in the number of abstract reasoners, as a certain good lady was, on obtaining from a friend an explanation of the word *prose*. "Bless me!" cried she in great astonishment, "is it possible that I have been talking prose all my life, without knowing it!"

If a few have been in the habit of reasoning without knowing it, it is probable, that a still greater number may have been led into an opposite error, and been accustomed to consider that as reasoning, which in fact, was nothing but assertion. It is by

reflection only, that we can be made to perceive the difference : and if the conductors of education are not capable of this reflection, it is not to be expected that the reasoning powers of the pupils will ever be properly or effectually cultivated.

In treating this important subject, I shall, in the first place, endeavour to distinguish betwixt that exercise of reasoning which is confined to particulars, and which is in reality only another mode of exercising the faculty of judgment ; and those more general reasonings which include the exercise of abstraction. I shall then attempt to explain the use and the advantages of generalizing ; and having stated and examined the objections which may be made to the cultivation of this faculty in our own sex, and shown it to be essentially necessary in the conduct of life, I shall conclude, by offering such hints as may suggest themselves for its improvement.

Though the terms judgment and reason are frequently applied indiscriminately in familiar conversation, we must endeavour to keep their appropriate signification in mind, in order to have a distinct notion of their several operations.

We have already seen, that it is the province of judgment to decide on the truth or falsehood of single propositions. From one or more of these judgments, reason deduces a consequence or argument which must partake of the nature of the judgments. If these have been just and accurate, the argument deduced from them must be convincing : if the judgments have been erroneous, the inference must be false. Reasoning has, by a learned and respected Author, who evinces all its powers,* been

* Rev. Dr. Gregory.

termed, "*the arithmetic of words*," and by this happy illustration, a more distinct idea of its operations is conveyed, than by the most voluminous explanations I have ever met with. To those who have never considered the subject, an example may not, however, be altogether unnecessary. I shall take it from the ablest of logicians, St. Paul; and beg you to turn to the account that is given in the Acts of the Apostles of his address to the Athenians. When brought before the most celebrated tribunal of antiquity, to answer to the accusation that was made against him, of being a worshipper of strange gods, observe with what exquisite judgment he manages his defence! All the arguments he makes use of, are obvious deductions from a series of judgments, the truth of which were every one acknowledged by his opponents, who, therefore, heard him with patience, and probably with admiration, until he came to speak of the resurrection from the dead; which appearing to their uninformed or prejudiced minds in the light of an unsupported assertion, was not acknowledged by the multitude to be a just inference from the antecedent propositions. But though "some mocked," and others said, "we will hear thee again on this matter," nevertheless, "certain men clave unto him and believed." An excellent account of the reception which just reasoning, when it opposes the passions and prejudices of mankind, is destined to meet with from the world!

If one error in the judgments from which we reason, has a like influence upon our deductions as the mistake of a single figure has in casting up a sum, it follows, that the cultivation of judgment ought as certainly to precede that of reasoning, as the knowledge of figures ought to proceed the at-

tempt at addition. I should rejoice in being convinced, that it never happened otherwise in education ; and that parents never deceived themselves into the belief, that their children deduced sensible inferences from propositions, which, so far from assenting to, they did not even understand.

If sound judgment be essential to that species of reasoning which is confined to particulars, it is still more so, when the mind, losing the consideration of particulars, enters into the wide field of general reasoning. It is here that the faculty of abstraction comes into exercise ; for without abstraction there could be no general reasoning ; and consequently no general principles, nor comprehensive views of the tendency of doctrine or of conduct.

Abstraction, as defined by Mr. Locke, is " that power which the mind has of separating an idea from all other ideas that accompanies it in his real existence." Thus, for instance, colour always exists in company with something coloured : but we can think and talk of the beauty of purple, or of lilac, without combining the idea of these colours with a bonnet or a ribbon : and when we think of the colour independently of the body that is coloured, it is an exercise of abstraction.

When we speak of the duty of man as an accountable agent, or a member of society, we do not speak of the duty of John, or Thomas, or any individual, but of *man*, from an abstract consideration of his powers and situation. Here it is evident, that besides the accuracy of the judgments from which we deduce our argument, much will depend upon the ideas we attach to the word *duty :* if these are just, appropriate, and comprehensive, and our ideas of the powers which we attribute to man, as a species, be the same, our reasonings will

be just and true : but if we have inaccurate or erroneous ideas concerning either of the terms made use of, our reasonings will be absurd and inconclusive. Thus we see, that as in every process of abstract reasoning we must of necessity have the mind employed upon the consideration of general terms, it is absolutely necessary that the mind should acquire clear, definite, and accurate conceptions of the meaning of words, without which requisite preliminary we can neither reason or understand the reasonings of others.

" The classification of different objects supposes a power of attending to some of their qualities or attributes without attending to the rest, for no two objects are to be found without some specific difference ; and no assortment or arrangement can be formed among things not perfectly alike, but by losing sight of their distinguishing peculiarities, and limiting the attention to those attributes which belong to them in common."* That this power of attending to some general qualities characteristic of a species, so as to arrange all the individuals in which it is found into one distinct class, has been slowly and gradually attained by human reason, is obvious ; as even with regard to those objects with which they are most conversant, the generality of mankind have as yet very imperfect notions concerning it.

In the first stage of society, the poverty of language and of ideas probably afforded no other classification than the simple one of animate and inanimate. In the second the animal creation would probably be divided into man and beast ; by

* Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind.

observing the varieties which distinguish the latter *genera*, a more exact classification would be produced, and to each species would be given the appropriate term, as bird, beast, fish, reptile, &c.* To these ruder classifications succeed the minute divisions of the philosopher, who, upon strict investigation, finds peculiar distinctions that invariably mark each tribe and family. To these he affixes a name, *a general term*, the definition of which being accurately known, gives to the naturalist a clear and distinct idea of the peculiar properties which characterize the species.

Such would naturally be the progress of knowledge, and such it is observed to be in all its stages from the savage state. And here we may remark, that in the account given us by Moses of the state of our first parents on their creation, the faculty of ABSTRACTION is represented as forming a distinguishing feature in the character of man, as he came from the hands of his great Creator. The capability of giving appropriate names to the animal creation was such a proof of the possession of this faculty, as unassisted reason would not probably have thought of producing, especially at a period when it is not to be supposed that the argument could be fully understood.

How much the knowledge of general terms abridges the labour of scientific research, must, from the foregoing considerations, have been rendered sufficiently evident. We must however remember, that a knowledge of general terms,

* This intermediate stage in the progress of classification seems to have been overleaped in some places. In Scotland, though surely not unknown, it is seldom used by the vulgar, who still adhere to the ancient division of man and beast. A fisherman calls a salmon a fine beast, and a good dame will tell you that her geese or chickens are as *bonny beasts* as you would wish to see.

though a necessary step in the path of science, is not science itself. A skilful grammarian—and grammar is nothing but the classification of words—may make but a sorry logician. He may be able to refer each word to its proper station, as noun, verb, or preposition, and yet be incapable of writing one page of common sense.

Although in the contemplation of every general term employed in any of the various branches of science, the abstract faculty must necessarily be engaged; yet in the contemplation of these, the mind still receives some assistance from the sensible objects whose peculiar qualities the term is intended to denote.

> "For each wide family *some single birth*
> He sets in view, th' impartial type of all
> Its brethren. Then whate'er his eye
> In this discerns, his bold unerring tongue
> Pronounceth of the kindred, without bound,
> Without condition."
>
> *Akenside.*

So far the mind is certainly assisted by the senses, and without accurate perception and attention, could make no progress in scientific research. But for the exercise of abstraction, another and a more extensive field is given. To resume the language of the poet:

> "Hitherto the powers
> Partake the relish of their native soil,
> Their parent earth. But know a nobler dower
> Their sire at birth decreed them; purer gifts
> From his own treasure; forms which never deign'd
> In eyes or ears to dwell."
>
> "Such is the throne which man for truth hath built
> Secure, unshaken. There he first conceives
> True being and an intellectual world,

> The same this hour as ever. Thence he deems
> Of his own lot : above the painted shapes
> That fleeting move o'er this terrestrial scene
> Looks up. Beyond the adamantine gates
> Of death expatiates, as his birth-right claims
> Inheritance in all the works of God,
> Prepares for endless time his plans of life,
> And counts the universe itself his home !"

Nor is it merely in the discovery, or in the contemplation, of moral truth, that the faculty of abstraction is necessary ; it is absolutely essential towards the proper and practical application of it ; being no less useful in the direction of our conduct than in the formation of our opinions. In the description of all the moral qualities, and of all the intellectual faculties of our nature, general terms are necessarily employed ; nor can any train of reasoning concerning any of these qualities or faculties be carried on, or even understood, till losing sight of particulars, we fix our minds upon the idea conveyed by the general term which is the subject of our consideration. Those subjects which can be treated of, without any reference to any of the individuals in whom the qualities or attributes under discussion are supposed to exist, are called general subjects. In treating these subjects, it may sometimes be useful, for the purpose of illustration, to refer to individuals as examples ; but it is by no means necessary ; and the more the mind can avoid the consideration of particulars, the less liable will it be to be led astray by those associations, which, though unavoidably attached to individuals, are foreign from every subject of general reasoning. Notwithstanding this very forcible objection, I believe, that in order to render the present subject intelligible to some readers, an illustration may be

necessary. I shall choose one that is perfectly familiar, and which, while it elucidates my present argument, may suggest hints for reflection that may not be altogether useless.

Let us suppose that patriotism is the subject of discussion, in an assembly where every person present, instead of a fixed attention to those peculiar qualities which are properly signified by the general term patriotism, each in their own minds refers to some particular individual, with whose idea the term is associated. It is easy to imagine what various and contradictory opinions will be advanced. One, perhaps, attaches to the term the idea of some turbulent demagogue, and classes it accordingly with sedition, conspiracy, and rebellion. Another connects it with the idea of an Epaminondas or an Aristides, and speaks of it as a compendium of all the moral and social virtues. A third, having got the simple definition of patriotism, as *the love of country*, considers the narrow, selfish, and unenlightened partiality which he indulges for the place of his nativity, as an infallible proof of his possessing all the patriotic virtues. Is it not evident, that if each of the above-mentioned disputants had obtained a just and comprehensive definition of the word patriotism, and kept that definition steadily in view, no difference of opinion could have subsisted among them concerning its merit or utility?

By the explanation that has been given of the laws of association in several parts of these letters, the impossibility of carrying on any just or comprehensive train of reasoning, where the mind is perpetually referring to particulars, will clearly appear. Whenever our ideas concerning any moral quality or action are formed, not from an abstract consideration of the true nature of the quality or

action under consideration, but from the particular individuals who possess or practise them, a thousand casual associations, unavoidably attached to these individuals, will bias our minds and pervert our judgments. Hence arise those inconsistencies in opinion and conduct which we so frequently meet with in persons of good hearts and ardent imaginations, but who, from being incapable of general reasoning, change their notions concerning vice and virtue, merit and demerit, as they are led by their passions and prejudices to condemn or to approve the actions of individuals. What in a favoured friend they extol to the skies as meritorious, they consider in an adversary as wicked and abominable. To every part of the conduct, and to all the opinions of the person they love, they attach the ideas of right; and to the whole of the conduct and opinions of those they hate, they attach the idea of wrong: the result of these false associations on their own conduct we can be at no loss to determine.

With another proof of the advantage that arises from an examination of general principles, I shall beg leave to trouble you.

In the conclusion of the letter upon attention, I gave a *general view* of the advantages to be derived from the religious observance of the sabbath; which, if acceded to as being founded on just principles, and fixed in the mind, must inevitably become an undeviating principle of action. If, on the contrary, the observance of the seventh day has merely been enforced by the example of that society in which we have spent our early years, it will be entirely dependent upon the principles of habit and association. Let the scene be changed, and new habits will be formed, and new associations will arise, which may probably make the observance

of Sunday as a day devoted to religion, the subject of derision and contempt.

Let us accompany the person of confined and narrow views to a place of public worship.

A sermon is a discourse in which some general principle is unfolded and inculcated. The reasonings made use of must necessarily be abstract, though the illustrations are taken from particulars. Every general principle is of universal application, therefore from every sermon that is properly constructed, some practical inference ought to be derived. But how is one who is incapable of abstraction, to comprehend the reasonings, whose force depend solely on the ideas annexed to the general terms employed? Had the true and proper definition of the words temperance and righteousness been unknown to Felix, or had he, during the apostle's discourse, not kept the general meaning of these abstract terms steadily in view, the deduction would not have made him tremble. We should accordingly find, that on the person incapable of generalization, the scope and tenor of the preacher's reasonings would be lost. But not so the application: though not a word comes home to *self*, there is still a Mr. or a Mrs. Somebody whom it exactly fits!

Addison employs upon this subject much of that charming irony of which he was completely master. I dare say you recollect his account of the lady, who, on reading "The Whole Duty of Man," discovered, in the description of those vicious propensities against which the pious author endeavours to guard his readers, the characters of most of her friends and neighbours; and by regularly recording the names upon the margin, converted a system of Christian morality into a libel on the whole parish.

From the little pains that have hitherto been bestowed on the mental cultivation of our sex, it is not extraordinary that the powers of abstraction and generalization should be so very rarely met with among us. Happily in the sphere in which it is most commonly our lot to move, they are not so indispensably requisite as sound judgment, or what is called common sense; but that the cultivation of the reasoning powers would not be eminently advantageous, I can by no means admit, since we see daily instances of the deplorable consequences of their deficiency.

Be not afraid my good friend, that I intend making speculative philosophers of your daughters. The duties of mankind in general, and of the sex in particular, are active; and an ever-wakeful attention to the *minutæ* of which they are composed, is absolutely essential to their performance. Small coin is found necessary even in the richest states; without it the *petit* detail of transactions of the day could not be carried on. But a man is not considered rich, whose stock consists of sixpences: though where his capital is of such a nature as renders it impossible to be converted into ready specie, his wealth is useless, and he may starve in the midst of plenty. Thus it is where the reasoning powers are so entirely occupied by general and extensive speculation, as to prevent an attention to the lesser, but more essential, concerns of common life. It is to obviate this misfortune, that I have so earnestly urged the necessity of cultivating the power of attention. Where a habit of quick and accurate attention to surrounding objects has been established, there is little danger of the mind's being absorbed by speculation, in such a manner as to incapacitate it for the performance of the active duties.

To such as fill subordinate situations in society, and whose wills are necessarily subjected to the wills of others, the capacity of exercising the faculty of judgment upon the simplest propositions may suffice to direct their conduct. But to such as are placed in opposite circumstances, who have not only to choose their own path, but to govern the wills and direct the conduct of others, a more extensive exercise of reason is essential.

The situation of no two persons is exactly similar: when, therefore, those opinions that influence our actions, are the result of our observations upon individuals merely, without any general reasonings upon first principles, we must infallibly be exposed to error. A few examples may be necessary to set this in a clear point of view.

Let us suppose a young man brought up to business; his attention solely occupied upon particulars; his views confined to promoting his own interest, and the interest of the individuals with whom by commercial ties he is connected. He succeeds; rises to eminence; gets into power; and has now the general commercial interests of the country committed to his care. Incapable of those comprehensive views which are the result of general reasoning, he continues to argue by a reference to individuals: his arguments do not apply; by his partial notions he betrays the general interest, loses his reputation, and sinks into disgrace.

Another young man, whose reasoning powers have been equally confined, enters into the church. He is zealous for the interests of his order; punctual in the observance of every prescribed ceremony, and scandalized at the proposed omission of a single sentence; not from a stedfast belief of the truth

which it contains, but merely because he finds it ordered in the Rubric. If, instead of confining his ideas of the interests of religion to a few particulars, this young man had had his mind rendered capable of discerning the general interests of Christianity; if, by contemplating the nature and consequences of piety and devotion, he had obtained lively ideas of their importance to the happiness of mankind; and by investigating the nature of his peculiar duties, not merely as a member of this or that community or denomination of Christians, but as an apostle of Christ; is it not evident that his character would have been more perfect, he himself more useful in society, and a brighter ornament to whatever church he belonged?

The same reasoning may be exemplified in instances taken from every rank and profession of men. Let us now see how it applies to our own sex.

While a woman remains under the protection of her parents, she is generally supposed to have little occasion for the exercise of her own reason, as her first duty is a blind and implicit obedience to their will.* When she is married, she has still less; as this blind and implicit obedience is then, even by solemn vow, transferred from the parents to the husband.

My sentiments upon filial obedience have been too fully explained, to leave any doubt concerning the reverence which I think due to the parental character. It is by habits of implicit obedience, that children must, as I conceive, be taught the subjection of self-will, long before the powers of

* See the system of Madame Genlis, as exemplified in the character of Adelaide.

reason begin to operate : and by habits of obedience I believe it is, that they can only be preserved from the many dangers attending youth and inexperience. But as life advances, and parental authority frequently opposes that which is impetuously urged by inclination, will the tribute of obedience be yielded without murmuring? Authority may be capricious; and against caprice, united with tyranny, judgment itself revolts. Confined to the examination of particulars, judgment weighs, and decides against the parental dictate. But abstract reason takes up the question upon other grounds; it considers trifles, not separately, but in the aggregate; it weighs them, not one against another, but opposes them to the principles of duty, and to the preservation of domestic peace, amity, and concord.

The child who is taught thus to reason and thus to act, while under the authority of a parent, will be prepared to fulfil the character of a parent with propriety. Capable of taking comprehensive views of her own duty and interest, as well as of the duties and interests of her children, she will never exert her prerogative in acts of petty tyranny, nor exact compliance with her will, merely to gratify caprice. It is the love of power which renders parents tenacious of authority, at a period when authority should cease. With children who have been properly educated, a parent who is capable of enlarged and comprehensive views will seldom have occasion to exert it.

I have already had occasion to remark, that it is the struggle for the gratification of self-will, which creates almost all the lesser miseries of life. By generalizing our ideas, these trifles, which are the most frequent causes of domestic contention, lose their importance; self-will becomes consequently

less concerned about them, and thus the most fruitful source of discontent is entirely cut off.

The mind whose comprehensive views of happiness takes in the whole period of existence, will not easily be disturbed by those little cross accidents which ruffle the temper, and destroy the peace of the frivolous and selfish: we accordingly find that those who have most successfully cultivated the faculty of abstraction, are remarkable for serenity and composure. This superiority to the events of life, constituted the virtue of the Stoic school. But there is this difference betwixt the philosophy of the Stoic and the Christian, that the former confined the views of the operation of circumstances entirely to *self;* while the latter embraces the interests of others. The one annihilates the sympathies and affections of the heart; the other regulates and improves them. The abstract idea of happiness produced in the stoic, apathy; in the Christian, active benevolence.

That the cultivation of abstract reasoning is conducive to social and domestic happiness, will appear still more evident, when we consider the consequence of being able to take comprehensive views of character.

The selfish and short-sighted, live a life of perpetual warfare. Having but one standard whereby to judge of every person, they are seldom satisfied; as they seldom meet with any who exactly tally with their idea of perfection. A casual act of kindness from the vain or capricious excites in them expectations of steady friendship; and when these expectations are frustrated, they express the bitterness of disappointment! Truth, honour, integrity, and every virtue of the heart, if not united with a certain species of courtesy, they despise; nor can

they, even in their dearest friends, overlook a blemish, though counterbalanced by a thousand endearing and amiable qualities. Such is the inevitable consequence of dwelling for ever upon particulars; nor can we, but by means of extensive and general views of character, avoid disappointment and disgust.

In order to enable us properly to appreciate the character of any individual, we must have cultivated all the intellectual powers; and obtained a perfect ascendancy over all the selfish passions. Unless the attention be lively, and the conception vigorous, we can never enter into the associations which give to character its form and colouring. To decide upon the tendency of actions and opinions, the judgment must be strong; and to see all the parts at once, by which alone we can form any idea of their general tendency and congruity, we must be capable of generalization. Nor will all these faculties suffice, if we have not obtained such a command over the affections of the heart, as shall prevent their interfering to bring in a false verdict. Were the necessity of these qualifications duly considered, it would teach us to pronounce with diffidence on the characters of others:—were they actually attained, it would put an end to inconsistency in our expectations.

Having got over the most difficult part of my undertaking, and, as I hope, succeeded in rendering the subject familiar to your mind, I shall for the present relieve you from the fatigue of attention, and reserve the farther application of what has been advanced for another letter.

Adieu.

LETTER XII.

ABSTRACTION.

Character of those who object to the cultivation of the reasoning faculty in the female sex.—Other objections stated and examined.—Means to be employed in preparing the mind for the exercise of abstraction.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

WHERE a confined education, an injudicious culture of the intellectual faculties, or the pursuit of mean and grovelling objects, have rendered a man incapable of enlarged and elevated views, it is not surprising that he should contemn the powers of general reasoning, (especially in our sex;) as they give that manifest superiority to the possessor, which pride must be pained to feel, and mortified to acknowledge.

The less the faculty of abstraction is cultivated, the less chance there is, that the mind will ever rise superior to the influence of early association. It is by taking an abstract view of the real nature of things, that early prejudice can in any instance be conquered: and where the mind is incapable of such views, we must expect that prejudice will continue to operate for ever.

Far, therefore, from being surprised at the mean notions entertained by men of narrow minds concerning the cultivation of the female understanding, we should learn to expect such sentiments, as the inevitable consequence of early prejudice and shallow intellect. Were this deeply impressed upon our sex, it would prevent the misery of disappoint-

ment: as the woman who is capable of reasoning, and unites herself to a man of inferior capacity, in the vain hopes of obtaining an acknowledged ascendancy, seldom fails to be convinced of her error, when it is too late to admit of remedy.

The advocate for the cultivation of female reason has other enemies to contend with, besides those of the above description; enemies, who, as they use the poisoned weapons of flattery, and seek to gain the passions over to their interest, are far more powerful adversaries than the proud, the prejudiced, or the ignorant.

Where the passions have been cherished rather than the affections, the qualities that excite emotion will be preferred to the virtues which commanded esteem. Unfortunately for our sex, reason, and its attendants, prudence and propriety, are discovered to be productive of associations connected with no emotions save those of complacency. No wonder, then, that the voluptuary, in whatever degree he may himself possess the powers of intellect, should be adverse to female cultivation.

That the sprightly prattle of unthinking folly should sometimes be found an agreeable relaxation, even to the philosopher, we must be willing to admit: but when ever it is systematically preferred by a man of sense, that man, however grave his deportment, or unblemished his reputation, will, if he candidly examine his motives, find them influenced by passion. The emotions in which he delights, are not connected with delicacy of sentiment, or elegance of taste; and in his disposition, the selfish affections will be found to have obtained an ascendancy over the social.

It is for the sake of the associations it excites, and not for the esteem it produces, that the melt-

ing softness of fictitious sensibility has had so many admirers among the sensible part of mankind. The real virtues of modesty, gentleness, and humility, produce sentiments of esteem and complacency; but though in a mind of delicacy these sentiments may touch the heart with emotions still more tender, they cannot be expected to make much impression, unless where these virtues are so thoroughly understood as to be properly appreciated. Not so with all the long *et cetera* of female weaknesses. A dear creature crying for she does not know why, or palpitating with terror at she does not know what, excites, by her tears and her terrors, associations of tenderness that produce emotions, which, though very foreign to those of esteem, are nearly allied to passion.

By those who consider such emotions as superior to every species of intellectual enjoyment, we may be assured the cultivation of intellect in our sex will never be countenanced or encouraged. To the younger part of our sex, they will deem such cultivation to be injurious; and to the married woman they contend that it is useless. But is it really so? Does it never happen, that a woman, from being incapable of taking a comprehensive view of her own and her husband's interests, unwittingly contributes to the ruin of both? Does no inconvenience ever arise from the pursuit of pleasures, which reason would disapprove? Do eager diputes concerning trifles never throw a little mud into the perennial stream of matrimonial felicity? Let these questions be answered by experience, and whatever may be pronounced with regard to youth and beauty, the cultivation of the reasoning powers will, to the married woman be allowed not altogether unnecessary.

Even as the mistress of a family, how should she, who is incapable of forming a general view of causes and consequences, arrange her plans in such a manner as nicely to proportion her expences to her income? How is she to direct the conduct of many individuals to the accomplishment of one general end, who is incapable of forming a distinct idea of the end proposed? Oppressed by the labour of prying into particulars, she will consider herself as the very paragon of good housewives; and after having been uselessly busy from morning till night, will wonder to find the result of all her pains

"Confusion worse confounded!"

I know not, indeed, whether the generalization of ideas be more requisite to a minister of state than to the mistress of a family. How necessary it is to the former, has been displayed by the elegant and judicious author of the Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind; its use to the latter, is a more becoming theme to the author of this humble performance.

A large family is a complicated machine, composed of a great number of individual and subordinate parts. In order to conduct it properly, there must, in the first place, be a comprehensive, *i. e.* a general view of the effect desired to be produced; in the next place, there must be an accurate conception of the powers of each separate wheel, or individual agent, and a just notion of how it can be employed to the best advantage; and lastly, a distinct view of how the whole is to be set in motion, so as most easily to produce the desired effect. It should ever be so constituted, that, like the silk-wheels at Derby, when any one part goes

wrong, that part may be stopped and repaired, without arresting the motion of the rest. Now it is clear, that the direction of such a machine depends upon too comprehensive an arrangement of ideas, to be ever attained by an attention to particulars. This arrangement is the work of generalization. The mistress of a family who is capable of it, does more in minutes than others effect in hours. It is worthy of your observation, that the management of a family, far from being an avocation of that mean and degrading nature, which, by some ill-advised advocates for the *rights* of our sex it has been injudiciously represented, calls forth all the faculties of the mind which have passed in review before us. If there be a material deficiency in any of these faculties, it will never be in a wife's power, however much it may be in her inclination,

"Well-ordered home, man's best delight, to make."

It is well observed by Lavater, that "bustle is the effort of indolence." Where the mistress of a family possesses quick perceptions, vigilant attention, accurate conceptions, sound judgment, and the capability of general arrangement, bustle will be unknown.

If the power of generalizing her ideas be essential to the woman who is still blest with the directing counsel of parent or husband, how much more so is it to her who is left in a state of widowhood with a family, who look to her for support and protection? In the management of their affairs, what can the poor orphans hope for from the conduct of one who can neither reason, nor understand reasoning? Let the men who consider imbecility as the chartered right of woman, say, how far a being

that is incapable of extending her views beyond the silly gratification of the silly wish of the present moment, can be supposed adequate to the performance of a double duty! Even granting a more favourable supposition, and admitting that she has that degree of judgment which can decide properly upon common affairs, if this judgment has only been exercised upon particulars, how will she be capable of forming a proper estimate of the plans of conduct most likely to conduce to her family's interest and happiness? Like a *tyro* at chess, she is incapable of calculating beyond a single move; and that move is prompted, not by a distinct view of the relative situation of all the pieces on the board, but by the temptation of winning an unguarded pawn. She takes the step, exulting in her discernment; and, when too late, beholds a train of consequences which were till then unseen and unexpected; and deplores, as her unhappy fate, what was the natural result of her narrow views and untutored skill!

Alas! how many promising families have dwindled into insignificance, or become the prey of vice, not from a want of the maternal tenderness, but from a deficiency in the maternal intellect? And who can tell to what the little girl, who now prattles by their side, may hereafter be destined? In the cultivation of her faculties, the happiness and prosperity of a numerous race may be involved. Is it by the light of imagination she is to direct their course? Is cultivated taste fully equal to the important task? Is it by music and by dancing that she is to instill principles into their tender minds? Or is it all of these combined which will enable her to act her part on the theatre of life with dignity and honour?

To a deficiency in the powers of general reasoning must we ascribe, not only the injudicious management of education, but the subsequent neglect of those accomplishments to which education has been solely directed. From the absence of this faculty, it rarely happens that the acquirements of female youth are made subservient to the pleasure or solace of after-life. Languages being studied merely as languages, accomplishments attained because they are accomplishments, without any central point or specific object, the young lady is no sooner removed from school, than her attention is completely estranged from pursuits, to which the whole of her time and attention had been hitherto devoted. Of the elements of taste or science in her possession she makes little use; they remain as detached pieces, isolated fragments of an unfinished fabric. They are not considered as foundations on which to build; nor are they applied to as resources, with which to give interest and dignity to domestic retirement. If not occasionally called forth by vanity, they are considered as useless, are consequently neglected, and at length forgotten. Happy they who are blessed with parents, whose enlarged minds are capable of comprehensive views! In their education there is nothing vague, desultory, or unconnected. Every branch forms an integral part of a great whole; all tends to accomplish one definite end. The acquirements of youth are thus rendered instrumental to the happiness and usefulness of after-life, and even the amusements of childhood, by the trains of ideas they have introduced, made a source of enjoyment to age!

By the mother who is incapable of general and extensive views, the education of neither sex can be

conducted with propriety; for by such the effects of present conduct upon future happiness can never be foreseen. When you speak to such mothers on the subject of education, they agree with every thing you say. Ever ready to admit the force of your arguments, and to coincide in your opinion concerning the vast importance of education, you exult in having convinced them, and expect to see an immediate change take place in the reprehensible part of their conduct towards their children. But alas! your expectations are fruitless, your hopes are vain! Without the capability of generalizing their ideas, they cannot see the relation which every particular part bears to the whole: and therefore, though they admit your opinion upon the whole to be just and proper, they do not perceive how it concerns any particular point, and, with the best intentions in the world, go on in their former track, nor give one glance towards the consequences.

The conduct of these good ladies in this particular is exactly similar to that of the Christian world in general with regard to religious principle. All acknowledge its excellent tendency upon the whole, though few permit themselves to judge of every practice according to its spirit. Superstition and infidelity equally rest upon particulars. The cloistered monk, who, in the days of ignorance, venerated the paring of a saint's nail, and sought the favour of God by a life useless or injurious to man, had not views of religion more confined than those of the sceptic, who makes such instances an argument against the truth of the Gospel. It is in the want of those comprehensive ideas which embrace the spirit of the christian doctrines, while the

conceptions are employed on the adventitious circumstances connected with it by association, that persecution in all its degrees, and bigotry in all its branches, have had their source. And by views of education equally circumscribed has the progress of the human mind been fettered, and the development of its superior faculties rendered so rare and uncommon, that the advantages attending it are seldom understood.

With regard to the cultivation of abstract reasoning, it must indeed be confessed, that other objections have been started, which at first view appear of so serious a nature as to be not a little alarming; and as these objections have had weight with those who are superior to the illiberality of prejudice, they well deserve our minute inquiry and anxious investigation.

The most forcible argument produced against the cultivation of the reasoning powers, is inferred from the conduct of individuals, which is such as to authorize the assertion—*that those who reason best, frequently act as if they had no reason at all.* Powerful as this argument may appear, it is not the only one urged against the utility of abstraction; as every person conversant with scholastic disputes can witness, that there is no doctrine however absurd, no action however immoral, that abstract reasoning has not been employed to justify and enforce. Even the ingenuous and venerable Reid observes, that "when reasoning is used to justify what a man has a strong inclination to do, it will only serve to deceive himself and others; and that when a man can reason, his passions will reason, and they are the most cunning sophists we meet with."

Instead of being appalled by these proofs of the insufficiency of the reasoning powers, I rejoice in the opportunity they afford me, of still more amply elucidating the principle upon which I have all along proceeded, viz. the absolute necessity of paying a due attention to the cultivation of the first faculties which appear in the human mind ; and which, by the wise Author of nature, were evidently intended as the basis of the succeeding faculties. That to a neglect of these primary faculties all the instances of the inutility of the reasoning powers may be fairly traced, I am thoroughly convinced ; for as soon should I believe, that respiration injures the circulation of the blood, and that the heart would perform its office better, if the lungs were taken from the human body,—as that any of the mental faculties with which the Almighty has graciously endowed his intelligent offspring, were intended to be either useless or injurious !

Leaving the instances of misconduct in the reasoners of the other sex to more able investigators, I shall confine myself to a particular examination of those popular and plausible arguments, by which so many have unfortunately been convinced of the impropriety of cultivating the female understanding

It has been observed, that women who have reasoned upon subjects of abstract speculation with much skill, have shown in their conduct neither judgment, nor propriety, nor a delicate sense of moral rectitude : that they who have been most remarkable for talents, have not always been most remarkable for virtue : that genius has frequently led to error : and that females who have cultivated the higher powers of the understanding with most success, have manifestly neglected the peculiar duties of their sex and situation. It is moreover

observed, that though men of talents and learning are generally modest in proportion to the superiority of their attainments, vanityis commonly the companion of every species of superiority in our sex.

Heavy charges! humiliating picture of female imbecility! How shall I answer to my sex for their exhibition? Believe me, my fair friends, that could I, in analyzing the instances which have been here brought forward, trace them to no other source than such an inferiority in the intellectual powers as renders the attainment of the speculative faculties incompatible with the exercise of the active duties, I have too much of the woman in me not to endeavour to keep our own secret. But if to a defective education all the errors alluded to may be fairly traced, I shall, instead of censure, hope to receive the meed of approbation.

Often does the ill-judging vanity and pride of parents lay the foundation of such characters as have been above described. The over-educated and the uneducated are equally incapacitated from making a proper use of their faculties. The conceptions of the former, having been stretched to embrace abstract propositions at a period when they ought to have been strengthened on the objects of perception, become dull and languid as to those objects; and the judgment having, like the conceptions, been exercised upon speculative inquiry, before it had been improved upon simple propositions, has neither soundness nor vigour.

Parents may flatter themselves, as much as they please, concerning the extraordinary progress of the child, whom they have anxiously endeavoured to render a phenomenon of science or literature at an early period; but future experience will prove, that, wherever the higher faculties have

been unnaturally called forth, before the earlier ones have acquired sufficient strength, the character will, upon the whole, be weak and imperfect. Where there are strong powers of conception, imagination will, in children whose education is thus pushed forward, exert an early influence; and often do the observations which pass for reason in such children, originate in no other source. Imagination becoming thus predominant, will frequently usurp the place of judgment in the processes of reasoning; and when reasoning, which ought to be a series of judgments, is thus converted into a series of brilliant combinations, what can we expect as the result?

Imagination is, of all the powers of the mind, that which is most liable to the influence of passion. By passion, therefore, and by early association, will the abstract reasonings of persons of uncultivated judgment be directed.

Where education has been injudiciously conducted, such false associations must of necessity take place, as have a manifest tendency not only to pervert the judgment, but to corrupt the heart. These associations create the pride of superiority on account of acquirements which ought only to be estimated according to their use. Whatever is not brilliant in talents or in conduct is despised, what is merely good and useful is held in contempt. Can it be supposed, that minds thus formed should pay much attention to the duties of domestic life?

The same fundamental error in education renders the characters which are formed by it, prone to embrace opinions which are at variance with sound principle. Wherever the imagination has been called forth, and judgment is suffered to lie dormant, the mind will be apt to be led astray by

every brilliant novelty, however false or dangerous the doctrines to which it leads. To detect sophistry is the province of judgment; and where judgment is weak, and imagination strong, we may be certain that instead of being detected, it will be cherished and supported. (H) Hence the race of female free-thinkers; not one of whom, as far as my observation extends, have had their faculties regularly cultivated.

Even where the judgment has been exercised upon abstract propositions with such success as to prevent its mistaking sophistry for truth, though the reasonings may be just and accurate, the conduct may still be ridiculous and absurd. This may at first view, appear paradoxical; but if you consider what was said upon the faculties of attention and conception, the problem will be quickly solved. Where those faculties have been neglected, present objects will make no impression; and an ever-wakeful attention to present objects is so essential towards the performance of every active duty, that without it there can be no propriety in behaviour, no regularity in conduct.

Where the conceptions are slow with regard to all but speculative truths, there can be no knowledge of character; consequently the opinions of such persons, with regard to the merit or demerit of individuals, are founded, not on solid judgment, but on the airy basis of imagination. Hence the ardent likings and capricious hatreds of persons who boast no common share of genius, but who are destitute of judgment. The likings of such persons we shall, however, find to be without affection, though their hatreds are not always free from malignity. It is in what may be called the lesser sympathies that affection has its source. Where

there is no attention, these sympathies can have no existence; for to enter into the feelings and interests of others without lively attention and conception, is impossible. Those who feel not sympathy, can never be the objects of sympathy; such characters, therefore, may excite admiration, but they will never attract affection or esteem.

The faculty of abstraction, where the previous faculties have been regularly cultivated, has a manifest tendency to allay the fervour of passion, and to control the impetuosity of desire. Far otherwise however, will it be found to operate, where it is under the dominion of imagination; reason will then be enlisted in the service of the passions, and employed to justify what sound principle and sober judgment must condemn. It might seem invidious to point out instances to illustrate the truth of this observation: but no one who has been conversant with the world, or with books, can fail to be acquainted with them.

The most important part of education is that which a man gives himself. But if the foundation of this self-instruction has not been laid in the early cultivation of judgment, and the faculties which precede it, the self-instructed will be liable to errors in opinions and in conduct. Where the ground is permitted to lie fallow, weeds will assuredly spring up. If care be not taken in our early years to give those associations which are favourable to sound principle and rational conduct, associations may take place highly unfavourable to both.

The female who, after a deplorable deficiency of early education, possesses sufficient energy to set about acquiring information for herself, labours under peculiar disadvantages. She may devote

her time to study, but if she have not judgment to direct these studies, pride and pedantry will be the probable result. A multiplicity of ideas without arrangement are, in reality, very useless to the possessor, yet such is the inevitable consequence of that desultory reading, which by our sex is so often mistaken for knowledge. Nor does she whose judgment is uncultivated gain much by confining her researches to one particular object; for by imagination will the value of that object infallibly be magnified, so as to render all others comparatively mean and insignificant. Hence proceeds an ardent zeal concerning speculative points of doctrine, a zeal which, it may be observed, increases in exact proportion as the point in question is removed beyond those boundaries which mark the sphere of human knowledge. Frequently have I known the seeds of discord and animosity sown in private families by the ill-judging ardour with which such points have been opposed and defended; but never did I know an enlarged and comprehensive view of the doctrines and *spirit* of Christianity, bring forth other fruits than those of peace and love. By the union of judgment and generalization these comprehensive views are produced; but by abstraction without judgment, we have only an exaggerated view of the importance of those points upon which the mind has, from some peculiar circumstance, been led to dwell: no wonder, then, that the duties of life should be despised by those whose attention is solely engrossed by subjects from which they are quite remote.

The tendency of the cultivation of the superior faculties to promote vanity in the sex, was the last of the objections stated. In order to oppose it, we need not change our ground; for never shall we

find the reasoning powers productive of vanity in a well-regulated mind. Where the judgment has been taught to appreciate the real value of every object of pursuit, and the idea of superior excellence has been firmly associated with the proper discharge of the religious, the moral, and the domestic duties; where the heart has been early taught to bow with reverence to virtue, however humble the garb in which it is found; and the conceptions enabled to enter into the characters and feelings of others; there the mind will be in no danger of being inflated with vanity, on account of a conscious superiority in the reasoning powers. Persons of this description will, on the contrary, be often humbled by a conscious sense of their inferiority in point of real worth, when comparing themselves with those who boast not the same advantages. Such humiliation is salutary to the soul, and dangerous is the state of those who have never felt its influence!

In all the instances which have come under our consideration, it is evidently not the cultivation of the reasoning faculty, but a deficiency in the faculties of attention, conception, and judgment, which have occasioned a departure from the path of duty and of common sense. Though in these instances I have confined myself to my own sex, the same argument will, doubtless, be found to apply with equal force to the other; speculative men, who are incapable of conducting the common concerns of life, being little less frequently met with, than reasoning women who are neglectful of its duties.

To those who, from an enlarged view of the advantages to be derived from the cultivation of the powers of abstract and general reasoning, are desirous of laying the foundation of these powers in

the minds of their children, the following hints may not be altogether unacceptable.

It has been supposed by some philosophers, that the vegetable mould which covers the greatest part of the *terra firma* of our globe, carries in its bosom the seeds of all plants, flowers, &c. and that these, for the greater part, lie dormant only for want of proper *stimuli* to bring them forth. However this may be with regard to the vegetable world, we can have no doubt of the truth of the theory, when applied to the human mind; and were we to bestow our attention in discovering the means that are best adapted for exciting its latent powers, instead of employing all our pains in rearing in it a few sickly shrubs of our own planting, we should be far more amply repaid for our labour. The faculty of abstraction, like all the other powers of the mind, wants only the proper degree of excitation in order to expand and become productive. But it must be excited with caution, and by no means permitted to outgrow judgment, beneath whose shade it ought to be reared, nourished, and brought to maturity.

From the explanation given of the use of general terms, the necessity of having clear and accurate conceptions of the meaning of words, must have been rendered sufficiently obvious. The definition of words ought to form a part of the daily occupation, from the time that the mind is capable of just and accurate conceptions. As the pupil advances in knowledge, exercises upon words that are nearly synonymous will be highly useful, and may be rendered very amusing; and as, from the poverty of language, the same word is frequently used in a variety of senses, it will be of infinite importance to have a ready and quick apprehen-

sion of the different meanings attached to every word. This can only be attained by constant exercise; nor can it be fully attained, till a large stock of ideas has been acquired: but if this exercise of the mind is begun at an early period, and unremittingly pursued, the number of ideas acquired from reading or conversation will be increased in an incalculable degree.

An accurate conception of the meaning of words, besides increasing the number of ideas, is an excellent preservative against those false associations which engender prejudice. Many are the bitter disputes which an accurate knowledge of the associations attached to the words made use of by either party, would effectually prevent. Let us suppose, that I had been accustomed, from a consideration of its colour, to give to a carrion-crow the appellation of *blackbird*, while you gave the same appellation to the species of birds commonly so called. The properties of the blackbird become the subject of conversation; I mention its disagreeable qualities and hoarse voice; you aver it to be one of the most melodious of the vernal choir. I ridicule your assertion: you deny mine. We call each other's veracity in question; the dispute gets warm, till it is at length decided by some ingenious friend, who points out the origin of our mistake. Here, indeed, the dispute might at any time be settled by a reference to the object; but if, instead of the word blackbird, religion, or loyalty, or any other general term of equal importance, had become the subject of debate, it is plain, that while a shade of difference took place in the associations attached to it, we never could come to an agreement.

Besides an extensive acquaintance with the various associations attached to the same word, it is necessary that an extensive knowledge of things should be acquired by the young person whom we wish to have prepared for exercising the speculative faculties to advantage.

Those who enter upon general reasoning with a stock of ideas derived from few sources will, notwithstanding the accuracy of the ideas they possess, be liable to many errors. Narrow as the sphere of human knowledge is, it is too extensive for the grasp of human intellect; yet so curiously interwoven are its various branches, so dependent on each other are all its parts, that none can be thoroughly understood without a comprehensive view of the whole. This observation ought to be illustrated to young people in a variety of ways. It will be the best preservative against that vanity and presumption, which *a little learning* is so very apt to produce. It will likewise be a stimulus to the acquirement of ideas upon various subjects; and prevent the mind from overrating the value of its own pursuits, or depreciating that of others.

What I have here advanced upon the necessity of acquiring a variety of ideas, may, upon a superficial view, appear inconsistent with what I formerly said upon the inutility of desultory reading. In the ideas I have expressed, there is, however, nothing irreconcilable. That mode of desultory reading which I condemn, does not make sufficient impression to produce those trains of thought which are favourable to arrangement; and without arrangement we shall only, by augmenting the number of ideas, augment confusion. Those who possess but a scanty wardrobe, may cast the few things they have into an open drawer, where

they will readily be found when occasion calls for them; but if all sorts of things are stuffed without order into the same place, in vain will you search for the smaller and more delicate articles amid the cumbrous heap. Still, however, what you put into the drawer you will find in it. Not so with what is put into the mind; unless its contents are fastened by the chain of association, they will either be entirely lost or useless.

"Except some professed scholars," says Mr. Gibbon in a letter to a young lady, "I have often observed, that women in general read much more than men; but for want of a plan, a method, a fixed object, their reading is of little benefit to themselves or others." The observation of method in reading, so far from being unfavourable to the acquirement of a variety of ideas, is essential to it; and is therefore worthy of our serious attention.

The following illustration will serve to place this subject in a clear point of view. Supposing your pupil to be acquainted with the general outlines of ancient and modern history, and that it is wished to give him or her a more particular knowledge of some one of the European states; the first books you would naturally consult are those which treat of its origin; you then have recourse to the authors who trace its progress through all the purifying conflicts it has sustained, from barbarism to refinement. But this knowledge of the succession of public events in the order in which they occurred, would be of little avail, if not traced to those hidden springs in which they had their source. These are the passions, the opinions, and the prejudices, of the chief actors on the

given theatre. To have clear ideas concerning these, there must, in the first place, be an adequate knowledge of the human mind; and in the second, accurate conceptions of the views and associations on which the opinions and prejudices described originated. Unless accurate ideas concerning these are obtained, the subject can never be thoroughly understood. Nor will a distinct conception of the moral causes of events be sufficient for our purpose; to these must be added adequate ideas of the physical. The relative situation of the country, its geographical and natural divisions, soil, climate, produce, &c. &c. must be known; or many of the events related will be unintelligible. Thus we see, that to obtain a perfect knowledge of any one country or district of the globe, a variety of books on different subjects must necessarily be consulted. But while one object is kept in view, the ideas acquired, however various, will be so arranged as to be always useful; and the greater the number of these ideas, the better will the mind be enabled to take general and comprehensive views on every part of the subject. Whoever enters the field of knowledge with his eyes fixed upon one object, and thinks to arrive at it by resolutely remaining blind to every other, will find that he has mistaken his path; while he who has no fixed object in view, will wander in an everlasting labyrinth of perplexity and confusion.

As no accurate idea can be formed of any object which is only seen in one point of view, it follows, that the opinions formed from such a partial knowledge, must ever be erroneous and superficial.

Observation upon the opinions and associations of others, as these are modified by situation and circumstances, is such an essential source of ideas,

that persons placed in circumstances which afford no opportunities for this species of observation, must, of necessity, have a very limited fund. In order to make these observations effectually, the mind must be in full possession of the primary faculties; and to enable it to draw just inferences from them, it must be capable of generalization. To persons thus qualified, that station in society which affords the most extensive views, is evidently the most advantageous. The higher and the lower walks of life are, in this point of view, attended with equal inconvenience; while those who are placed on that happy isthmus in society, from which they can occasionally make excursions into either of the neighbouring countries, are alone blest with the opportunity of making just observations on the inhabitants of both. They see the confined views of every little circle; they contemplate the effects of those various associations which characterize each separate class; and appreciating the value of their pursuits and enjoyments, according to the standard of reason, rejoice in the goodness of the Great Creator, who, while he implanted the desire of happiness in the human breast, taught imagination to seek for it in such a variety of objects.

Before your pupils enter upon speculative inquiry, it is above all things essential, that their judgments should be exercised in ascertaining the limits of human knowledge. All speculations concerning what is placed beyond the reach of the human faculties, ought to be avoided; for from them no possible advantage can be derived. They must ever end as they begin, in uncertainty and doubt; but far from being a harmless waste of time, they frequently excite the violence of prejudice and animosity.

I shall conclude with some observations from Doctor Isaac Watts, of the truth of which, I am qualified to judge from observation, though not in all respects from experience. He advises the pupil *to accustom himself to clear and distinct ideas, to evident propositions, to strong and convincing arguments.* "Converse much," he continues, "with those friends, and those books, and those parts of learning, where you meet with the greatest clearness of thought and force of reasoning. The mathematical sciences, and particularly arithmetic, geometry, and mechanics, abound with these advantages: and if there were nothing valuable in them for the uses of human life, yet the very speculative parts of this sort of learning, are well worth our study; for by perpetual examples, they teach us to conceive with clearness; to connect our ideas in a train of dependence; to reason with strength and demonstration, and to distinguish between truth and falsehood. Something of these sciences should be studied by every man who pretends to learning, and that," as Mr. Locke expresses it, "*not so much to make us mathematicians, as to make us reasonable creatures.*"

"The habit of *conceiving clearly*, of *judging justly*, and of *reasoning well*, is not to be attained merely by the happiness of constitution, the brightness of genius, or the best collection of logical precepts. A coherent thinker, and a strict reasoner, is not to be made at once by a set of rules; any more than a good painter or musician may be formed extempore, by an excellent lecture on music or painting." This, like all our other habits, must be formed by *custom* and *practice.*

Adieu.

LETTER XIII.

REFLECTION.

Different applications of the term.—Sense in which it is at present used.—Advantages of reflection.—Foundation of it to be laid in early life.—Inutility of reflection, when not exercised under the influence of religious principle.—Illustrations.—Conclusion.

You know, my dear friend, that by reflection, in the popular sense, nothing more is understood than a serious re-consideration of any subject which has engaged our attention. By metaphysicians, however, the term is applied in a stricter sense, to denote that power which the mind has, of examining its own operations. Few persons of education are destitute of reflection in the former application; but if we strictly adhere to the latter meaning of the term, I am afraid, we shall find that the number of those who are capable of exercising it, is extremely limited.

The exercise of reflection implies the possession of all the preceding faculties; and where any of these are defective, we need not expect that the mind will ever be brought to reflect upon its own operations: as to do so effectually, is the highest and most useful exertion of the intellectual powers. If this exercise of intellect be wanting, it is not the knowledge of all the sciences, nor an acquaintance with all the branches of human learning, that will lead to true wisdom. For this great purpose an accurate knowledge of one's own heart is more essential than all the learning in the world. Deceit is the great vice of society; but, I believe, few people practice so much of it upon others as upon

themselves; nor is it possible, that self-deceit can be avoided by any other means than the frequent exercise of reflection.

Though reflection is the last of the powers of the human mind in the order of appearance; yet, like all the other faculties, it will certainly spring by a proper preparation of the soil. It was to pave the way for its production that, in treating of the cultivation of the heart, I so strongly recommended a frequent appeal to the feelings, in the conduct of children towards each other. By this they are early taught to bring things home to their own bosoms, and to see every part of their conduct in the light in which it is viewed by others. It is thus, that the feelings and affections of the heart may be made to assist and strengthen the opening judgment, instead of misleading and perverting it. It is thus, too, that the conceptions concerning the judgment of others upon our own conduct may best be improved. And whenever this preliminary step has been neglected, I believe the cultivation of reflection will become difficult, if not impossible.

Those who are least accustomed to reflect upon the operations of their own minds, will ever be found most forward to judge with severity of others. Who are the evil speakers? Who are the retailers of petty scandal? Are they not those who never cast a thought on the motives by which they themselves are governed? The knowledge of one's own mind will ever bring such a sense of the imperfection of its various faculties, and of the impositions to which they have been liable, from the influence of passion and prejudice, that candour must be the inevitable result. To this salutary exercise of the power of reflection, pride and selfishness oppose such insurmountable obstacles, that wherever they predominate, it can never be

expected to take place. By him who "knew what was in man," and whose doctrines tend to bring all his various powers and faculties to the highest perfection of which they are susceptible, pride and selfishness were therefore condemned in all their branches; and in order to destroy their influence in the human heart, self-examination (which is nothing but a mode of exercising the power of reflection) was enjoined as an essential duty. Here we have another striking instance of the consonance of the institutions of the Gospel with the first principles of the philosophy of the human mind. It is by this self-examination that we are commanded to prepare ourselves for the most solemn ceremony of our religion; by it alone we can come at a knowledge of the governing motives of our conduct, which on that solemn occasion we are to try by no capricious standard. Love to God and unconditional benevolence to man, with all their correspondent desires and affections, are the unerring rules by which we are to judge of the state of our hearts, and the complexion of our actions. On this account I cannot but consider the frequent repetition of the duty above alluded to, as a most efficacious means of cultivating the power of reflection, and of rendering the exercise of it habitual.*

I well know, that by making religion the basis of my theory, I shall expose myself to the derision of some minds, and the contempt of others: as all that I have advanced will, by certain persons, be attributed to the prejudices of education. I can, however, aver, that they are not its *unexamined*

* How little the forms of confession, which are often put into the hands of young people upon this occasion, are calculated to answer the end proposed, must be obvious to every thinking mind. If, instead of seeking to discover the hidden springs and sources of their own actions, and judging of them as they appear in the sight of God, they are taught to pronounce themselves guilty of all manner of sins in the lump, the heart will be little benefited by this religious duty.

prejudices; and that if I still adhere to the old-fashioned principles in which I was brought up, it is not without a liberal and candid examination of those which others have embraced.

When I first began seriously to contemplate the operations of the human mind, I was far from being fully aware of the intimate connexion which subsisted betwixt these and the Divine commandments; nor had it ever occurred to me how very eminently the one was adapted to the other. In vain did I endeavour to find in any other system a perfect conformity with the human character, in all its various modifications. Other systems applied to particulars, that of the Gospel alone I found to be of universal application; and when, with this view, I examined its contents, I in vain endeavoured to find one passage the spirit of which was not in unison with the theory of the human heart.

When the intellectual faculties became the subject of investigation, I found, and confess I delighted in finding, that so far from being inimical to their highest cultivation, the sacred volume afforded the greatest assistance; while its doctrines held forth the most animating encouragement to the improvement of all the mental powers. Nor ought I to conceal, that the examination of the principles of the human mind, gave, on the other hand, strength to my faith, and confirmation to my belief in the divine origin of the sacred oracles. (1)

I hope that after this candid declaration, none will accuse me of prejudice, till they have thoroughly examined the tenor and tendency of the principles I have avowedly adopted; as, if they decline this task, I think I am at full liberty to retort the charge of prejudice on them.

Let us now see, how far the advantage to be derived from the exercise of reflection is increased or diminished by religious principle.

I presume it will on all hands be admitted, that whatever tends to augment the benevolent affections, and to destroy the influence of the malevolent passions, has likewise a tendency to increase the happiness of the individual and of society. When a person, whose notions of moral obligation are founded on the selfish principle, takes a view of the operations of his own mind, and perceives the unworthiness of the motives by which his best actions have been sometimes influenced; when he is made sensible of the errors of his judgment, and the fallacy of his reason; what is the result? Instead of humbling himself before the Searcher of Hearts, and imploring the Divine assistance, he looks round upon the world, and in the follies and the crimes of others, finds excuse and consolation. A sense of his own weakness diminishes not the force of pride, or abates the arrogance of presumption. If obliged to confess that some appear to act more wisely or more virtuously than himself, it is to superior cunning, or superior good fortune, that he attributes the difference. The knowledge of his own motives produces suspicion with regard to the motives of others. The consciousness of his own erroneous judgment begets scepticism with regard to their opinions. These feelings and associations are not of a nature to inspire benevolence; they are on the contrary, intimately allied to all the malignant and dissocial passions.

Very different is the improvement that will be made by the man of religious principle, from the conscientious exercise of the power of reflection. A sense of the many instances in which he has been influenced by those passions which it has been his

endeavour to subdue, will beget contrition and humility; conscious that his actions are known to the world, while his contrition and repentance are unknown to all, save God and his own heart, he will naturally suppose it to be the same source with others, and will, accordingly, be inclined to pity rather than to censure. The difficulty he finds in keeping his good resolutions, and in acting up to the calm decisions of enlightened judgment, will lead him to reverence and esteem those whose conduct evinces a greater degree of energy and consistency; while, at the same time, it will render him careful of attributing bad motives to all who are guilty of improper conduct. In tracing the source of his erroneous judgments, he will discover so many associations originating in circumstances over which he had little or no control, that he will view the prejudices of others with as much candour as he considers their actions. Never will the person who is capable of the exercise of philosophical reflection, presume to take the prerogative of *judgment* from the Most High: never will he arrogantly decide upon the acceptance or reprobation of a fellow mortal, on account of the speculative opinions he may have embraced. Every emotion excited, every affection produced, by serious reflection, are (while reflection is exercised under the impression of religious principle) of the benevolent class. Humility, diffidence, earnest desire of Divine assistance, hope towards God for future aid from a sense of former mercies, and love and gratitude springing from the same source, are each allied to benevolence. Wherever devotion produces affections of an opposite tendency, there, we may assure ourselves, reflection has been uncultivated.

In exact proportion as the power of reflection is enjoyed, shall we reap advantage from the cultivation of every other faculty. If incapable of applying our

judgments respecting right or wrong to ourselves, we shall not be much the better for their accuracy. If we cultivate imagination so as to produce the most brilliant combinations, and are without the power of reflecting on their tendency, and from an examination of our own heart, discovering the emotions and dispositions which produced them, we may amuse ourselves by wandering in the flowery fields of fancy, but will never gather any of its precious fruits.

Without the exercise of reflection, the faculty of abstraction is a dangerous gift. If we are incapable of referring to our own consciousness for the truth of those opinions derived from general reasoning, we shall be liable to be imposed upon by sophistry; and be destitute of means to detect the imposition. Even in the cultivation of TASTE, it is impossible to proceed to any length without the exercise of reflection. Those who are destitute of this power never can be made to comprehend the principles upon which taste is founded. They, therefore, suppose the emotions of sublimity and beauty to be derived from some inherent instinct, as natural and as universal as that which assists us in distinguishing sweet from bitter. Nor without reflection upon the operations of their own minds, is it possible that they should see it in a different light.

As a still farther argument in favour of the cultivation of this power, it may, with propriety, be remarked, that without the assistance of reflection, we shall neither have "manners void of offence towards all men;" nor will any appear to have manners void of offence towards us. Persons who are accustomed to take circumscribed and narrow views upon every subject but their own importance, consider every aberration from the line of conduct they prescribe, as an intended insult or manifest impropriety. They consider that as disrespect, with which no idea of disrespect was associated in the mind of the offending

party. They construe thoughtlessness into insolence; and neither make allowance for the levity of youth, nor the infirmity of age. Whatever is said of them one note below the key of panegyric, is so offensive as to be deemed unpardonable. The friend who points out an error, is accused of hatred and malignity. And here it may be observed, that to those who never examine their own hearts, the imputation of blame must necessarily be intolerable, because they know not how far it may be just or unjust; and willing to impose upon themselves, they revolt at the idea of being scrutinized by others. Hence the heart-burnings, jealousies, and strifes, which are, alas! so prevalent in the world.

Let us see how far the evils above mentioned would be remedied or removed, by a more general exercise of the power of reflection.

When we reflect upon our notions of propriety or impropriety with respect to manners, we find them entirely dependent on association. In members of the same society, the same associations will doubtless take place, though modified by the disposition and character of individuals. For this modification the person of reflection makes allowance, from the conviction that, from stronger associations of propriety attached to certain forms, some lay a greater stress upon them than he does; he therefore concludes, that what he deems essential, others may consider as indifferent. Conscious that his own omissions are void of pride, insolence or malignity, he considers the omissions of others as equally blameless: or if he at any time perceive his feelings hurt by neglect, or wounded by improper treatment, instead of indulging in the bitterness of wrath, he takes a serious retrospect of his own actions, and severely scrutinizes his own conduct, lest he too should be guilty of inflicting a wound in the bosom of the innocent.

With regard to the judgments of the world, or of individuals, it is only the person of reflection that can be superior to their influence. Without such a perfect knowledge of ourselves as enables us to appreciate with truth and precision the strength of our faculties, and the merit of our conduct, we shall be liable to be elated with flattery on the one hand, or depressed by censure on the other. By reflection, and by reflection alone, can this knowledge of ourselves ever be attained.

> "When self-esteem, or others' adulation,
> Would cunningly persuade us we were something
> Above the common level of our kind,
> '*Tis this* gainsays the smooth-complexion'd flattery,
> And with blunt truth acquaints us what we are."
>
> *Blair.*

Nor is a just acquaintance with ourselves less necessary to prevent dejection when popular favour takes flight. Severely must those, who have no other measure of their own worth but popular opinion, feel the loss of that public applause on which they rested! The person, on the contrary, who, under the impression of religious principle, has exercised philosophical reflection, will be alike superior to popular applause or popular condemnation. He will make use of both as means of further improvement in virtue. Conscious that in the former case his merits have, in many instances, been overrated, the consciousness will increase humility. And where his actions are misrepresented by calumny, or mistaken by prejudice, he will rejoice that it is to mistake and misrepresentation, and not to truth, that he owes his present loss of favour. Or if, on a scrutiny of his motives, he does not find them

blameless, far from feeling malignity towards those who have anticipated him in the discovery, he will acknowledge his error, and thus have an opportunity of exercising some of the noblest and most heroic of the human virtues!

Thus, my friend, it appears, that in all the circumstances and situations in which an intelligent being can be placed, reflection is essential towards the perfection of the human character. Those who are aware of the consequences attending its cultivation, will find abundant opportunities for laying the foundation of it in the minds of their pupils. Every observation on the actions of others, on the ways of Providence, or the events of human life, may be rendered subservient to the cultivation of reflection, by the care of a judicious instructer. If the advantages resulting from reflection be kept perpetually in view, pains will be taken, even from the earliest period of life, to remove all obstacles that might impede its progress. What these obstacles are, I have, in the letters on the cultivation of the heart, attempted to delineate. By their removal the path will be left open; but without the assiduous cultivation of all the intellectual faculties, it will never be trod. By destroying pride, self-will, arrogance, and all the dissocial and malevolent passions, and introducing associations favourable to benevolence, we render the disposition amiable; but let us remember, that to be amiable is not to be virtuous. Virtue consists in the right direction that is given not only to the affections of the heart, but to the powers of the mind. It is not of a negative, but of a positive nature. It implies the proper employment not only of the moral but of the intellectual powers. These the wisdom of the Great Creator has ordained to a mutual dependence on

each other, so that neither can be in any considerable degree improved, while the other is neglected. Where the feelings of benevolence are unknown, the exertions of the understanding will be circumscribed by selfishness within narrow limits: and where the impulses of the benevolent heart are not controlled and directed by judgment, they will be productive of only partial good, and may eventually lead to extensive misery.

As the theory I have endeavoured to establish, with regard to the necessity of cultivating the various mental faculties in the order in which nature produced them in the human mind, and of laying the foundation of their cultivation, in watching over the associations which affect the desires and affections of the heart; as that theory must, if generally received, tend to produce a serious alteration in the plan of modern education; I am prepared for the opposition by which it will probably be encountered.

Some, with that tone of false humility which contented ignorance, when united with pride, never fails to assume, will perhaps, object to it as too perfect. "We don't want to make philosophers of our children," say these good ladies; "and as for intellectual faculties and such stuff, we know nothing about it, and are never abit the worse. Our children are not more spoiled, or less taken care of, than the children of other people; and must just take their chance as the children of other people do. If we send them to genteel schools that are well established, we do our duty."

Such arguments admit of no reply. But I am aware that objections may come from persons of a superior description, who having set their hearts upon seeing their children excel in certain accom-

plishments, may be unwilling to be convinced, that they have not only overrated the value of these acquirements, but have mistaken the road to excellence, even with regard to the objects in question.

In discussing the subject of taste, I endeavoured, by such a slight investigation of its principles as my limits would admit, to show the impossibility of producing excellence in the fine arts without the cultivation of the previous faculties. The same reasoning may be applied, with some modification, to all the sciences, and to every branch of human knowledge. By much pains, and incessant application, you may make your child a linguist at an early age ; you may likewise make him an historian, a botanist, a mineralogist, or what else you please : that is to say, you may, by means of perception—the only faculty that is then ripe—impress his memory with the words and terms belonging to these several branches of science and literature. Satisfied with his progress, you delight in finding his attention absorbed in these pursuits, and fondly expect that when he arrives at maturity, he will give such proofs of superiority as shall at once enlighten and astonish the world.

Beware, I beseech you, beware of encouraging hopes which must infallibly end in disappointment ! If at that period when the conceptions ought to have been invigorated by attention to surrounding objects, attention has been occupied elsewhere, the conceptions will become habitually weak and languid. And if, by early and incessant application, you have destroyed that vivacity which is by nature intended to be instrumental in increasing the flow of ideas in the youthful mind, the conceptions will not only be languid, but the ideas will be few. From languid conceptions, and a small number of

ideas, what hopes can be entertained of the improvement of judgment? Your pupil has been busied in learning the result of other people's judgments, but how is he to decide on their truth or falsehood, if he has never been taught to exercise his own? When a person so educated arrives at maturity, he may be of use to others as a sort of walking dictionary, an animated encyclopædia; but he will neither illumine the world by the bright fire of genius, nor stop the progress of vice by the energy of exalted virtue!

Reflection, which in its operation requires seriousness, is wisely ordained by nature to be the last power that unfolds itself in the human mind. Nor does it begin to operate, till the ideas are numerous, and the judgment strong. Where these preliminaries are enjoyed, reflection will not be found inimical to cheerfulness. It is the slow succession of ideas which produces low-spirited listlessness; and the incessant intrusion of the same train of ideas that produces melancholy. But where such a perfect command has been obtained over the power of attention, as to render the mind forever alive to the passing scene, the ideas must necessarily be too numerous, and have too much variety, to admit of either of these consequences. Where the languid and the absent see nought but a joyless blank, the active mind finds sources of improvement and delight. The former lives as on a desert island, where he depends on foreign supplies for his existence; the latter extracts from the surrounding scene an ample store of nourishment: nor does the continual feast which nature spreads for the light heart and the ardent imagination, pass unenjoyed; while habits of philosophical arrange-

ment and reflection, renders his pleasures not only harmless but wholesome.

If the sketch I have endeavoured to give of the human mind, be drawn from truth and nature, the absurdity of attempting its partial cultivation by an inversion of nature's laws, will be an obvious inference. According to the plan which my feeble hand has attempted to delineate, it appears, that the vital parts of the corporeal frame are not more intimately connected, or more essentially dependent on each other, than the active and intellectual powers of the mind: and that as the muscular strength of a single limb does not constitute bodily health or vigour; so neither does the capability of exerting a single faculty, in however eminent a degree, give any title to mental superiority.

In prescribing for the diseases of infancy, he must be a bad physician who did not extend his views to the probable consequences of his prescriptions on his patient's future health; how much more blame-worthy the person, who, in giving advice with regard to the human mind, limited the consideration of consequences to the contracted span of the present life!

My views will, I trust, be found to be more extensive; they embrace a wider portion of existence. May those who adopt them, find, to their blessed experience, that they lead to the path of GLORY, HONOUR, and IMMORTALITY!

Adieu.

ADDITIONAL

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS,

TO THE SECOND VOLUME.

(B) p. 28.

THE want of veracity, so justly and so often complained of, is always attributed to want of principle: but that it does not always proceed from an inclination to deceive, I have had frequent opportunities of observing. An instance which now occurs to my recollection, will serve as an example. It happened that the son of a neighbour of mine in the country, had the misfortune to be bitten by a dog which belonged to a decent tradesman in a neighbouring town. It was an object of much importance to ascertain whether the dog (who was killed the moment after the accident) had shown any symptoms of hydrophobia previous to that event. The servants and workmen belonging to the house were separately examined upon the subject; but to no purpose, as no two of them agreed in any one point. Here no one had an interest to deceive, but, on the contrary, all were equally anxious to recollect the truth; yet so contradictory was their testimony with regard to the events of the day before, that it is highly probable the exact truth was told by none.

In Fielding's voyage to Lisbon, a circumstance somewhat similar to the above is related; and I make no doubt that occurrences of the same nature are in the recollection of many of my readers. Every such example, if investigated with accuracy and candour, will serve to confirm the truth of my theory respecting the fatal consequences arising from neglecting the early cultivation of the faculties of attention and conception.

(C) p. 44.

In the long and painful illnesses with which I have been afflicted, I have had it in my power to make observations upon the effects of attention, which may have escaped far more penetrating and reflecting minds. That a violent fit of pain absorbs the whole attention, every one who has had any experience in that way will readily confess; but if we are

at all able to reflect upon the operation of our minds, during the feelings of extreme pain, we shall be convinced, that the attention we bestow upon the pain, increases our perceptions even of the fainter sensations to such a degree, as to render us insensible of the moment when the acuteness of pain begins to subside; so that (especially if we indulge in fretful or grievous lamentations) the pain must have been very considerably diminished before we are willing to acknowledge, or are indeed conscious of, its having been at all relieved.

By this it appears that attention prolongs the apparent existence of pain; and it follows as a necessary consequence, that where attention is called to another object, (as in the case of expected relief from some powerful agent) the minuter sensations will pass unnoticed; and the cure be allowed to be effected from the moment that the pain had actually subsided. The slighter complaints to which delicate constitutions and enfeebled minds are particularly subject, obey those laws of attention in a remarkable manner. To a selfish attention to every slight sensation of uneasiness, they (many of them at least) owe their very existence: and no sooner is the attention called to other objects, than they immediately disappear.

> "Limera's sick; make haste, the Doctor call—
> He comes, but where's his patient?—At the ball!
> The Doctor stares: her woman curtseys low,
> And cries, *My lady, sir, is always so,*
> *Diversions put her malady to flight.*"

Does it not evidently follow, that to give the mind a command over the faculty of attention, is to lesson not only the moral evils of life, but to shorten the duration of the physical? That it can preserve the mind from the assault of ideal misery, would be sufficient argument for enforcing the cultivation of a power so precious; but when we consider it as abridging the period of real suffering: when we reflect that, by this command over attention, we rescue a considerable portion of our existence from the dominion of evil, and restore to the mental powers that activity of which an attention to pain had deprived them; its advantages appear in a still more striking light.

(D) p. 90.

As a proof that the memory of perception may be enjoyed in high perfection, where all the other faculties are defective, I shall beg leave to adduce the following instance, which I had in very life from a venerable friend, who was then advanced in years, and had in youth been witness of the fact:—An idiot, so utterly destitute of the faculty of conception as never to be capable of acquiring the use of speech, (though it did not appear that his organs, either of speech or hearing, were at all defective) was for a great number of years confined to an apartment, where he was occasionally visited by his family and their friends. In this apartment stood a clock, to the striking of which he evidently appeared very attentive, and it was the only sign of attention which he ever displayed. Every time the clock struck he made a clucking noise with his tongue, imitative of the sound; and this he continued to do as often as the hour returned. After standing many years in the room with him, the clock was removed; when, to the surprise of all, he continued

as the hour came, to make exactly the same noise as he had learned to do from it. He was perfectly exact in the calculation of the time, and never missed an hour in the day or in the night: nor did he ever cluck one too many or one too few; but continued to the hour of his death to give the exact notice of the lapse of time, without mistake or variation.

(E) p. 157.

Did a doubt remain concerning the utility of providing instruction for the poor; that doubt must give place to conviction, even in the minds of the prejudiced, on contemplating the two opposite portraits drawn of the peasantry of Scotland, at the distance of little more than a century, by two distinguished writers, whose sketches are equally entitled to the praise of truth and accuracy. The first presents such a picture of poverty and profligacy, idleness and vice, that we are scarcely surprised at the conclusion of the enlightened author, Fletcher, of Salton, who saw no other remedy for the evil, but the revival of the detestable system of domestic slavery. Such was the state of the lower orders in Scotland, and in the seventeenth century, according to the authority of one who united the virtues of the patriot to the talents of the statesman and the wisdom of the philosopher, and whose local knowledge, of the subject leaves us no room to suspect him of inaccuracy or misrepresentation. By the establishment of parish-schools, this deplorable portrait of vice and misery has been so happily and so completely reversed, that did it not stand upon such unquestionable authority as an original, it might well be considered as false or spurious. Let it be compared with the account of the Scottish peasantry, drawn by the masterly hand of the elegant and accomplished biographer of Robert Burns. Never were local manners more happily delineated: never were the effects of local circumstances more justly displayed. As it is a subject upon which I am intimately conversant, I should not do justice to a work from which I have received such pleasure and instruction, if I did not add, that in the "Remarks on the character and condition of the Scottish peasantry," I have in vain endeavoured to discover a single instance, in which that elegant imagination of which the author is so evidently possessed, has been permitted to exaggerate or to soften a feature beyond the simple truth. In tracing the causes of those striking changes, which a single century has produced on national character, Dr. Currie has not, perhaps, given all the weight to the influence of the clergy, and the happy effects of parochial residence, which the subject may seem to merit. Whoever has been present at the performance of the baptismal ceremony at a country kirk, and observed the earnestness with which the moral and religious education of the child was enforced upon the parents; making a material part of that vow which they were then in the face of the congregation solemnly to take, cannot wonder at the zeal displayed by the lower orders in Scotland with regard to the education of their offspring. In the life of Burns, this paternal zeal is beautifully described: In the letter from his brother Gilbert the editor, its effects are powerfully illustrated.

(F) p. 186.

I wish I could prevail on accomplished young ladies, to consider the effect that would be produced by the exertion of their musical talents in

places of public worship. Why should church be the only place in which they are ashamed to let their voices be heard? Is it, that they think none should join in the praise of God, but such as are paid for it? Is it the theme that is unworthy of their talents, or the *place* that is unfit for their exertion; or is the audience too mean to be indulged with hearing the delicious melody of their fine voices? The cultivation of true taste would, I think, teach the reverse of all this. Can songs of gratitude and praise proceed with more propriety from the lips of hirelings, than from those of youth and innocence, in the full enjoyment of life's best blessings? If uniting their voices to those of the assembled congregation in the house of God, be an act of humility; let it be remembered, that humility is a quality associated with all the feminine virtues, and that the expression of it must therefore be highly favourable to those associations, which produce the emotions of beauty.

(G) p. 191.

If the principles of taste be such as they are here described; if fitness and congruity be constituents in their essence; it is to be feared that the leaders of the *beau monde* are not yet many steps removed from barbarism.

The false notions that have been entertained concerning taste, have in many respects been injurious to society. By rendering the subject contemptible in the minds of the serious, they have prevented that investigation of its principles which would have brought them into general notice, and rendered their application universal. It is from the want of this investigation, that taste has been considered as altogether unconnected with the subject of morals, though a very little reflection would be sufficient to point out their affinity. True taste would associate ideas of esteem and respect to all those qualities which are estimable and respectable; from neglect of its cultivation many of these qualities are held in contempt. What are the associations which evidently prevail in the minds of the young and the gay, with respect to the virtues of modesty, prudence, and temperance? Does it not obviously appear that ideas of glory are often attached to qualities directly opposite: and that such dress and manners are adopted as may best show the strength of this association in the most glaring colours? To the eye of taste, each season of the year has its peculiar beauties: nor does the venerable oak, when fringed with the hoary ornaments of winter, afford a prospect less various or delightful, than when decked in the most luxuriant foliage. Is, then, the winter of life connected with no associations but those of horror? This can never be the case, until ideas of contempt are associated with ideas of wisdom and experience; associations which the cultivation of true taste would effectually prevent. Suppose the person who wishes to improve on Nature's plan, should apply to the artificial florist to deck the bare boughs of his spreading oak with ever-blooming roses; would it not be soon discovered, that in deserting Nature he had deserted taste? It would be remembered, that the colouring of nature, whether in the animate or inanimate creation, never fails to harmonize with the object: that her most beautiful hues are often transient, and excite a more lively emotion from that very circumstance. I leave the application to your own sagacity; and should sincerely rejoice, that the observations I have made, would lead to an examination of the principles on which they have been founded.

(H) p. 222.

The author of these letters has, in a former publication, endeavoured to expose the consequences of this exercise of the united powers of abstraction and imagination, where judgment had been uncultivated. She is, however, apprehensive, that many who have been amused with the fiction which she at that time made the vehicle of her sentiments, have failed in drawing the inferences from it, which it was her wish to have rendered obvious. The observations she has had an opportunity of making upon this head, have furnished her with new arguments concerning the utility of abstraction, and the fatal consequences arising from the incapacity for generalization. Those who are incapable of general reasoning, think it impossible to draw genuine pictures of human character but from particulars. They are, therefore, for ever hunting after the originals from which such pictures must, in their opinion, have inevitably been drawn; and thus they lose the advantage that might have been derived from making proper inferences; while all their ideas of what is just and natural, being drawn from the same confined and narrow source, their criticisms are equally unjust and imperfect.

(I) p. 236.

The slow progress of the human mind in attaining abstract ideas, appears to me as an irrefragable proof, that the notions of the Divinity obtained in the earliest ages by the Hebrew patriarchs could only have proceeded from Divine revelation. Without such revelation, the abstract ideas of the Deity that are to be found in the writings of Moses and the prophets are entirely unaccountable, and far more miraculous, that is to say, much farther removed from the common course of events, than any of those miracles which have been stumbling-blocks to the sceptics. Let us study the tenor of our Saviour's addresses to the Jewish nation, and we shall find how strongly he reproaches them, for having exchanged the pure and abstract notions of the Divine attributes, for the low and grovelling conception originating in the senses. All the discourses of our blessed Lord have a tendency to lead the mind to form pure, *i. e.* abstract ideas of virtue. Conforming himself to the capacities of his auditors, he illustrates by familiar objects, but never fails to carry the mind beyond the narrow conceptions of the senses into the regions of abstract truth.

Of all the books that ever have been written, we shall find the Bible the most favourable to the improvement of the faculty of abstraction. Experience proves the truth of the assertion. In countries where the knowledge of the Bible is denied to the laity, the conceptions of the Deity become mean and degrading. Unsupported by the abstract ideas of his glorious attributes and perfections which the Bible furnishes, the mind calls in the aid of sensible objects. Hence the worship of images and a thousand superstitions, which chain down the mind to the consideration of individuals, and by preventing the expansion of the faculties in general reasoning, retard the progressive improvement of the human race.

Philosophy itself, when it proudly refuses divine assistance, flies on low and grovelling wing. Let us compare the conceptions of some of our celebrated naturalists concerning the origin of things, with the sublime

ideas upon the same subject to be found in the book of Job and in the Psalms. The rester in second causes follows in his reasoning the method of the Indian, who, endeavouring to find somewhat whereon to rest the vast fabric of the world, supposes it upheld by an elephant, while the elephant is supported by a tortoise! The other from contemplating the abstract ideas of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, exerted through infinite space, beholds the solution of every difficulty in the agency of the divine mind, and, sensible of the circumscribed limits of the human intellect, confesses that the knowledge of many things is removed beyond its grasp. I may be thought, in what I have here advanced, to have stepped a little beyond my own proper sphere: but the breast that takes an interest in the happiness and improvement of the human race, will be apt to lose the consideration of its own insignificance in the more enlarged idea of being a part of the great whole.

THE END.

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